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or, How to Make a War About Nothing

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~~144~~
LEFT WINGS

OVER

EUROPE:

or,

How to Make a War

About Nothing

by

WYNDHAM LEWIS



CHUCKE

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THERE are some people who consider that the only way to attain to a good peace (and there is no one who would be so mad as to say that *this* peace is a good peace) is to have another good war. We must have another, bigger and better, war. Then there will be peace. I am not of that opinion. And in this book I am writing *against* war. Nothing else. I have done my best to show how irrational, and often insane, are the arguments advanced by those who seek to accustom us to the idea of another war.

To assert that these people, who are doing their best to ensure the outbreak of another war, are *wicked*, is true: but it is beside the point. They do not pretend to be good. They pretend to be clever. They may of course be clever, from their standpoint; but it would be the reverse of clever of *us* to let them be clever at our expense. Their moral standing I must leave to others, more fitted than I am to discuss it. What I am concerned with here is their *reasons*, which are bad — so bad, indeed, that one is tempted to inquire if people have ever been asked to lay down their lives, in great numbers, in so meaningless a cause — so *bad* a cause in every sense.

The last war was fought, ostensibly, in the belief that *such* a war — so gigantic, costly, long, and without quarter — would 'end' war. And an unlimited number of wars can be fought on the ground that the last one was not bad enough, and that we want a *really* bad war to bring about perpetual peace.

But the trouble is, surely, that people who are prepared methodically to plan such fearful wars as these are

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scarcely the people most likely to guide us to perpetual peace. However much they may talk of 'peace' — and the word is never off their lips — is it really peace they desire, or something else?

What it seems to me we have to do is entirely to banish the word — the dream — *Peace* from our horizon. *We should have nothing to do with Peace at all.* It has no more reality for us than one of the worlds of the Milky Way. It is a waste of time to occupy ourselves with it — and that time-wasting is *the least* of its evils.

What fools we shall look to future men! Can we *always* be caught in even the cheapest Messianic net? Even when the Messiah proposed to us is a bank-thug, or a sort of highbrow Al Capone? It seems so.

Yet is it not precisely that millennial machinery, implicit in the notion of 'perpetual Peace', of which we have, of all things, to beware? Having, eighty per cent of us, most imprudently abandoned our religion, are we going to succumb to sham Messiahs, in whatever guise they come, one after the other? Are we destined to be the victims of this *spiritual vacuum* — which of all vaccums Nature most 'abhors'? Must we, in consequence, be at the mercy of any shrewd and plausible crook who makes a noise like a 'saviour'? — or who takes it into his head to trap us (after the manner of the communist) by way of those automatic responses of ours — by playing upon the latent christianity which as ex-christians we still secrete, in large quantities; albeit unknown to ourselves? Is that the vengeance that waits upon our apostacy!

Meanwhile let us do our best to shun *the abstract* like the Devil in person? Let us, above all, have nothing to do if we can help it with 'Peace'. It is the Devil's handi-

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work, depend upon it! — Let us refuse, however much coaxed or menaced, to consider peace-in-the-abstract. *No War* — that we may admit into our consciousness as something comprehensible. But *Peace*!

Let us shut our ears to every note of the siren-song about 'perpetual Peace'. 'Perpetual Peace' is the condition of the Dead: and we want the Dead to go on burying their Dead for a long time yet. — Perpetual peace is all very well, but that is *not* what we want to talk about, let us say to the peace-mongers: We only want to hear about peace-at-the-present-time — not peace-for-ever.

Peace for the next twenty-five years — *there* is a sensible notion now. But the man who comes along with a plan for Eternal Peace — which he *guarantees* he will secure for you *if only* you will consent to enter upon another world-war — just *one more* war (a really *bad* one this time — far worse than the last): you should only have one answer for that gentleman. Very short and sharp; it should be such an uncompromising answer that he would never be tempted to come hawking that kind of 'peace' again on your particular doorstep.

Let us, then, put Peace entirely out of our minds. Let any man who talks of Peace be at once suspect at the mere word; let us set our teeth and put a cold glint in our eye, and show the peace-talker that the game is up. Let us tell him where he gets off, and let him remain in no doubt that he has addressed himself to the wrong person.

On the other hand, let us concentrate all our attention upon *War*. For War is what 'Peace' is really all about. Politicians only talk about peace-in-the-abstract when they propose to have war-in-the-concrete. Let us have

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a great deal to say about War — but War divested of its ‘indivisible peace’ trappings. Let us much more ask our rulers — ‘Why are you so anxious for War?’ They will find that question a difficult one to answer. Let us refuse to talk about Peace with them; but let us *insist* on talking about War with them. In that way we may get somewhere: not to the Millenium, certainly; but not into another war worse than the last, at least.

Let us say to them: ‘We want to hear nothing about “Perpetual Peace”, or “Indivisible Peace”, or “Peace in Our Time”, or “Peace with Honour”, or Peace-in-the-abstract of any sort. Let us talk very earnestly about *War*. We should very much like to have your undertaking that you do not intend to crack another world-war on our heads just yet. Say for a quarter of a century! Will you answer that — and cut out the abstract cackle and all the sly and slimy “peace” stuff please, we have heard enough of it!’

As far as Great Britain is concerned, there is, in 1936, not a shadow of reason for war with anybody — Hun, Yank, Chink, or Frog. It is because there is no *concrete* reason whatever, that *abstract* reasons have had to be thought up and trotted out.

But I am sorry — I meant to say there is not a shadow of reason to ask the *majority* of Englishmen to engage in war. Forgive me for my oversight in not qualifying my statement. I was, with instinctive democratic maladresse attributing too great an importance to the mere majority.

Of course there are many excellent reasons (there must be — else we should not all be in the terrible situation where we find ourselves) why *some* people should plot war and foment war. But usually, when that

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happens, *some* handy excuse can be found. To-day there is *none*. It just happens that to-day there is *not a single excuse* handy. Everyone, both 'victors' and 'vanquished' are too utterly poor, and much too disillusioned; that is the reason for this unfortunate dearth of 'reasons'. It is in this respect that the present situation differs from all others.

That is why everyone is so apathetic. Politicians even have the impudence to complain of this apathy. But after all there is nothing to get excited about! The Covenant of the League can hardly be described as very exciting: nor is the often expressed desire for 'security' on the part of the most heavily armed Power in the world, now satisfactorily allied to the second most heavily armed Power in the world. These things do not exactly make the average Briton see red — however much he is solicited by his Government to see 'Red', in the interests of 'Perpetual Peace'.

But why should a quiet old gentleman like Mr. Stanley Baldwin wish the average Englishman to see red? To that I can pretend to give no adequate answer. British Foreign Policy is 'replete with mystery', as the Italians say. Ever since Adolf appeared upon Stanley's horizon, Stanley has been behaving in a very unaccountable way. In this book I merely state facts, desiring that all may draw their own conclusions, according to their respective lights: as far as is compatible with my task of historian, I eschew speculation.

In place of the *reasons* — or fairly solid and plausible excuses — that their governments usually give to nations, when they want them to go to war, His Majesty's present

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government have constructed a sort of birthday cake of abstractions — all rose-coloured with a peculiarly unpleasant variety of moral uplift.

If, without jargon — and without tunes on the harmonium — the Government were compelled to put into a few pithy words why they were asking the British people for a mandate to go to war, they could only reply: 'In order to make the world safe for Centralized Government — to destroy the principle of the Sovereign State.'

But if they were asked *why* they were so concerned to bring this about (for is not Great Britain a sovereign state?), in such a murderous fashion, then, I fear, their *lips would be sealed*.

What I should like to see written by the person whose ungrateful task it may be to review or report this book, is something to this effect — 'This book is from cover to cover, one long plea against the centralization of power.' That, Mr. Critic, would be to go to the root of the matter. As truly as Mr. Roosevelt, or Mr. Litvinov are *centralizers*, the writer of this book is the reverse. — Centralized power — when it is human power — is for me, politically, the greatest evil it is possible to imagine.

A book written, as this has been, to meet an emergency, is governed to a greater extent than most compositions by the time-factor. The first phases of the international wrangle over the refortification of the Rhine mark, chronologically, its limit, in so far as it may be taken as piping-hot commentary upon current events. The latter part of it deals more with principles; the centre part is the most strictly topical.

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With the entry of German troops into the demilitarized zone of the Rhineland a new chapter in European affairs was opened. By the time this book is published we shall know whether the German offer to negotiate a 25-years' peace met with acceptance, half-acceptance, or refusal; whether as some believed at the time, that it should count as the beginning of a great appeasement in Europe; or whether it must date as the prelude to a universal appeal to arms.

What happens regarding this new phase in the so-called pacification of Europe will of course be governed by what went immediately before. And this book deals with the events which immediately led up to this final crisis. It sets out to define the position of affairs at the moment of this culminating act of rehabilitation by Hitler, which finally re-established Germany as a sovereign state, within its own frontiers, subject only to its own law; though outside its own frontiers ready to subscribe to the general law of nations. So much for the time-table, as it were, of what I have written.

Finally, as to the political colours under which what you are about to read sails. With regard to that I can set your mind at rest at once. I fly the flag of no party. My shirt is neither red, black, nor purple. Jefferson and Hitler, Burke and Bismarck — there are many names certainly I could mention which I should select for my political pantheon. And I may at once mention the fact that the name of our old friend Karl Marx would not be among them. I am, indeed, so remarkably *unred* that you may think me black. But do not let us worry about

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these labels. Let us get on with the war (Great War No. 2.)

But as a matter of fact it is not necessary to belong to any particular party in order to hold any or all of the views expressed in this book. Take for instance the League of Nations. I am by no means alone in my attitude of dissent where the League of Nations and all its works is concerned — regarded as a military super-state, enforcing its decrees by blockade and by war, or regarded as an impartial international tribunal, before which nations can plead, and be relatively certain to meet with justice.

But to demonstrate this you only have to refer back to the period when war at the behest of the League was first proposed to the British People as the most spectacular plank in the New Foreign Policy.

The misleading 'Ballot of Blood' signifies nothing at all. The majority of the British people would not agree to another war for whatever purposes, except to defend the shores of England. 'Defend Abyssinia — by so doing you will be defending Soviet Russia!' Sir Walter Citrine told his followers at last year's T.U.C. Congress. But only one Englishman in a thousand would regard the proposal that he should give up his life in defence of Soviet Russia as anything but a bad joke. And even when told that 'England's frontier is the Rhine', he scratches his head. For that seems to him a novel and meaningless essay in geography, on the part of an otherwise placid, reasonable and pipe-smoking — rather popular — politician.

As to my fellow anti-Leaguers: well, we are a motley crew — we are gathered from all Parties and none. Almost as much so as those *For-the-League up to the hilt*.

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A passage from the Nobel prize-winning pen of that paragon of Peace, Sir Norman Angell, will help us here. It occurred in the Foreign Affairs Supplement of *Time and Tide* some time last year:

‘What are the common factors of conduct or opinion which prompt, in respect of League Policy, the strange political alliances or alignment of forces which we are now witnessing? The common motives, that is, which prompt Sir Stafford Cripps to join hands with Sir Oswald Mosley; Mr. Maxton with Lord Rothermere; Mr. George Lansbury with Lady Houston; Mr. A. A. Milne with Lord Beaverbrook; Lord Ponsonby with Sir Henry Page Croft; the No More War Movement with the League for the Biggest Air Force in the world; which prompt the Socialist League to oppose Russia but make common cause with the Empire Crusaders; the Independent Labour Party to oppose the Labour Party but support the foreign policy of the Junior Imperial League?’

Sir Norman Angell believes, as you see, that party discipline should be powerful enough to overcome any personal scruple. If Communist Russia desires a world-war, then whatever the Socialist League may think of war in general, or of the justification of the particular war contemplated, is immaterial. And what of course he cannot understand is, since this would be an ‘anti-fascist’ war, how any socialist worth his salt could fail to fling himself into the fray — or, if too old, to help to fling everyone else within reach into it. Because, for his own vile and sinister motives, Sir Oswald Mosley plumps for peace, then Sir Stafford Cripps ought to agree to a world-war, merely in order to be opposite to Mosley on all occasions. But this is of course neglecting entirely the fact that Sir Stafford Cripps can hardly be supposed to

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arrive at his policy by watching to see what Sir Oswald Mosley will do, and then doing the opposite; nor of course is Sir Oswald Mosley likely to be always attending upon the current strategy of Sir Stafford Cripps. And some men, anyway, are not co-operative robots, but persons with a judgment of their own — whether black-shirts or red shirts, or with no shirt at all like the 'Bert' of the music-hall song — in matters of life and death more especially.

So I am definitely not to be counted among such as Mr. Anthony Eden, Capt. Victor Cazalet, Sir Walter Citrine, Mr. Vyvyan Adams, Mr. Isidore Ostrer, Sir Norman Angell, Mr. Winston Churchill, Sir Herbert Samuel, Miss Ellen Wilkinson, Viscount Cecil, and the Bishop of Durham. On this issue I am one of the Houston, Cripps, Maxton, Canon Davey, Beaverbrook, Mosley lot. I am *not* on the side of the Angels (either Norman or otherwise) — definitely.

On this supreme question of life and death it would seem, then — as demonstrated by the above marshalling of the names of champions for and against war — that party disappears. Socialist Leaguer and tory 'diehard' are found in the same camp; and in the opposite camp the faces of Messrs. Eden, Litvinov, Blum, Vansittart, and Angell are observed aflame with the same high moral purpose — namely, to show the rebellious Wop where he gets off and the Hun to mind his goose-step, and if he does not salute or cringe, to prick him with a bayonet.

But, you will say, these men are actuated by motives as far apart as the poles; in spite of the fact that they arrive, in this particular matter, at an identical conclusion. One goes pacifist to make the world safe for

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imperialist war; another is pacifist; and yet a third is pacifist for the occasion, at the dictate of party-strategy. That, of course is true. Nevertheless, there is something else at work, effecting this startling separation into camps, of ill-assorted partisans. There is more significance in this alignment than is accounted for by the factors suggested above. And there are other issues upon which much the same agreement would be found to subsist, among men wearing contradictory labels.

We think of the world as *politically* divided, more to-day even than formerly that is our way of dividing it. The political world is ostensibly divided into various parties. But human society is far more fundamentally divided into those who are political animals and those who are *not* political animals: into party-men and non-party-men. That is a far more fundamental division. The world is not all 'party'. It is, rather, composed of one type which is purely party-man, and of another type which possesses something that is non-partisan. The latter may be a party-man, too. But he is a person *as well*. That is the difference.

If you *must* choose a party for me — and I have no objection if that will make you more comfortable — please bear in mind this still more fundamental division to which I have drawn your attention above.

At present the whole world is about to split, and, I am afraid, to contend, for a very long time, upon a very great issue indeed. It is a far greater issue than that of party. This is obscurely recognized by the generality; the 'march of progress', the immense development of the technique of science, the breakdown of the present 'capitalist' system (for plainly half the world cannot

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remain out-of-work *for ever*) — everything seems to indicate some great turning-point in life upon this planet.

The real nature of the issue is very little understood. It goes under a variety of confusing names. But it has to do, perhaps first and foremost, with two capital conceptions of man and his destiny.

The sort of society for which one set of men are heading, whether they know it or not, is a mechanical, standardized society of robots conveniently mesmerized by slogans — worn down, all over the earth, into a monotonous consistency, until we are all as like as two peas. And the sort of society for which another set of men are heading is the opposite — one in which there is diversity and individual initiative. The former is the outcome of an almost mad predilection for the abstract and the theoretic. The latter is the outcome of a sane and rational appetite for the concrete and the real.

Now the word coined by Mr. Litvinov (a man typically endowed with the abstract mentality of his race), a word which has had a great vogue, namely, *Indivisibility*, is the master-key to all this complex situation. 'Peace is indivisible,' says that gentleman: and war, of course, the same. And of course, if it comes to that, everything else would be *indivisible*, too. All that would remain to be decided is *who should control this one and indivisible* human society — raceless, classless, nationless, and even individual-less.

If you will pursue that word 'indivisibility', wherever it may lead you: if you weigh all its implications, if you consider what, in practice, it must ultimately mean, in

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the shaping of human society, you have the clue to the present situation in the world.

The recent *volte face* of the British Government, is a vote cast by England (without consulting England) for Mr. Litvinov's 'indivisibility' — for 'indivisibility in our time', so to speak. But hear M. Herriot. The following passage is from his speech at the Radical-Socialist Congress in Paris, on October 25th, 1935.

'England stands for an international conscience, for the indivisibility of peace, and for collective security. Is it for France, who proposed the Geneva protocol — which provided sanctions — to say "no" now? After a slow evolution of ten years England has at last accepted the League policy advocated for years by France. . . . They (the English) have at last come round to the French point of view.'

England 'stands for an international conscience', 'England stands for "indivisibility"'; that is what England has been 'standing for' at Geneva, against 'nationalist' Italy — an 'anachronistic' country (the term used by Mr. Eden) which prefers the system of the Sovereign State, in contrast to that of the *internationalized*, non-Sovereign State. That is what England is 'standing for' against Germany — denying that country the most elementary right of a Sovereign State: namely, to fortify its own territory against attack.

'Indivisibility' is a very important political counter indeed. It is quite worth your while, without more delay, to find out what 'indivisibility' in the long run, really entails. In this book it has been my endeavour to assist you (without too many tears) along that path of political discovery — and awakening, it is to be hoped.

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We are all in for a great political conflict, which will have its counterpart in every country. And the form that this conflict will everywhere take, is, stated in its simplest terms, that of a struggle between internationalists and nationalists — between those who are in favour of centralized power, and those who are not.

But the tag 'nationalist' is misleading. For many of those opposed to the 'indivisibility' of internationalism are not necessarily greatly enamoured of such 'nationalism' as found expression in the 'Celtic Twilight', or as is visible to-day in the fanatical Germanism of the Nazi. They *may* feel attracted by these movements, which glorify especial virtues and ways of feeling of a given nation, or they may, on the other hand, even be repelled by them. But that will make no difference.

In times of crisis men are opportunist or nothing. They will behave as what will be called 'nationalists', in spite of the fact that the roast beef of old England, or *Sauerkraut*, *Olla podrida* or *Bouillabaisse* may not be their particular pigeon. For the dangers to the individual — not only to the individual, or 'sovereign' *state*, but to the free citizen within the Sovereign State — involved in the politics of 'indivisibility' — in internationalism — may seem so great to them, that they would pitch their tent alongside of anyone vowed to resist to the death this monopolistic monster; whether the headquarters of that monster were Moscow or Geneva, or both combined. And as things are at present, of course, Moscow and Geneva are but two heads of the same 'indivisible' animal.

A last word, for the democrat. If you are a true democrat, there is nothing in the pages of this book which will pain you.

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Democracy as interpreted by Mr. Baldwin is of course an impudent mockery of that great traditional English conception of the State. As things stand at present, Parliament is practically non-existent. An autocratic executive decrees at certain intervals 'debates', upon matters of great moment. But they are not debates at all. They are a half-dozen very long speeches, always delivered by the same people. The six hundred M.P.s who sit there and listen to these speeches might just as well not be there at all. And as to a General Election, that is similarly as strictly undemocratic a happening as was a poll in a 'rotten borough'.

Yet Mr. Baldwin can scarcely ever open his mouth without attacking the principles of 'dictatorship', and the sort of 'despotic' regimes obtaining in certain less favoured countries than England.

Yet there are many worse politicians than Mr. Baldwin. We *can* trust him, at least, to go slow: to lead us into a war, yes, but at a slow and measured pace. And Mr. Baldwin should remember this (indeed perhaps he has, when in the teeth of the most violent opposition he passed over Mr. Churchill, and selected Inskip to put us in a posture to fight the Great War with Germany all over again — but *all in good time*).

Yes, Mr. Baldwin might at all times do well to remember that we depend on him and trust him, and that there are worse offenders than himself; whose motives, it may be, derive from sources of edification inferior to his own, and are directed to ends more murderously militant. Such as Mr. Winston Churchill. We trust Mr. Baldwin to bar the road to that particular firebrand.

Mr. Baldwin, it is probable, just *cannot help* expressing his horror of National-Socialist Germany, upon every

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public occasion. His speeches just compose themselves around the figure of the Führer without his knowing what is happening. Probably he does not mean to mention Hitler at all when he sits down to write them.

But Mr. Churchill's speeches are another story. And that gentleman's unceasing attacks upon Germany partake of the presenting of a pistol at the head of a great neighbouring state. Here there is *deliberation*. Whereas Mr. Baldwin just dreamily releases the trigger of a blunderbuss, aimed vaguely at the River Rhine, accompanying his almost automatic action with an assurance that it is of course no business of *his* what people do, but he cannot help feeling very strongly about their doing it — *c'est plus fort que lui!*

Mr. Winston Churchill, as a little foretaste of what might be expected once he got into the Cabinet, did last autumn for Germany what Mr. Eden had done for Italy some weeks before: he distinguished between the German people (whom he immensely admired of course, as brave fellows and awfully clever into the bargain) and the 'cruel' people who had managed to become their rulers. 'He bore no grudge and had no prejudice against the German people. He had a lively admiration of their splendid qualities . . . But . . . we could not afford to see Nazidom in its present form of cruelty and intolerance . . . paramount in Europe at the present time.' And he proceeded to blame the German Government for the Anglo-Italian dispute! But indeed there is nothing that Mr. Churchill would not blame them for.

But at all times what the British public have most to fear is the sentimental side of their latter day rulers. It is far more their moral nature, rather than their 'perfidy'

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or 'treachery', that must be a legitimate source of alarm to all and sundry.

The irrational, rather than the rational, aspect of their reactions to current events is liable to land us all in a very serious mess. That is why their actions are so incalculable, and why they cause so much uneasy astonishment abroad.

And of course there is always the practical certainty to be reckoned with, that they will invariably hang the wrong man. And it goes almost without saying that some peculiarly atrocious ruffian will, by ostentatiously drinking their health outside the courthouse, make them forget his crimes (and the more numerous and bloody, the more easily forgotten, oddly enough), and even offer him a seat beside them upon the bench; whereas some even sterner moralist than themselves (who even resorts to spectacular capital-punishment and reduces the butter and jam rations in his prisons) will make them see red and foam at the mouth; and even fit out a 'hang-the-kaiser' expedition, to wipe out this blot upon the easy-going, 'be fair to the criminal', character of the Law. — There are multifarious dangers inherent in the very nature of an incorruptible, muddle-headed, 'kindly', a bit self-righteous executive; dangers unknown to the inexpressibly corrupt and unbelievably tortuous governments beneath which most foreign nations groan — but at least with their eyes open — and possessing the democratic sanction to denounce, in round terms, which the Englishman, in *his* democracy, does not enjoy.

But here I will terminate this outline of the things to come in this book, having I hope given you the necessary foretaste of my methods and objectives.

PART ONE



CHAPTER I

AS THE 'EXTREMIST OF THE "RIGHT"' SEES IT

§ I

GREAT WAR NO. 2. — *As seen by the men of the Centrist Majority, and of the 'Right' and 'Left' Wings, respectively*

IN the postwar-to-end-war world of Europe, a situation has arisen which, everybody is agreed, is exceedingly alarming. Or, to qualify this in the interests of a greater precision, not everybody regards it as *alarming* — what is one man's meat after all is another man's poison: but everybody agrees that the present tempo of European diplomacy suggests the imminence of 'a general war' (the words of the American President) in the course of the next year or two.

There is no country, great or small, upon the European continent, to-day, that does not echo the word *war* — that does not talk war, write war, think war, and that, consequently, is not in some sense preparing for war. And war, there is every reason to suppose, can only mean general war, or world war. Wherever it starts, a war between two European States at the present time would scarcely be concluded before the whole earth had, in one degree or another, been at war.

It is the necessarily universal character of this war which causes it to overshadow everything else: which makes of it an event charged with such deadly consequences for all of us; or — again to dot *i*'s and cross *t*'s in

passing -- it makes it so for the majority: of those, namely, who must be the perplexed and unwilling performers.

The proximate cause of this new Great War which is bearing down upon us is the League of Nations, and the letter of its 'covenant', in which it is laid down that there shall be no change, henceforth. And, naturally, there *is* change. But it is to be now, and henceforth, change *in spite of* the League of Nations.

The League of Nations is not a league of *all* nations. It is in fact an alliance of two groups of nations. But it is of course a 'holy alliance'; such things generally are.

The League of Nations is the confederacy of the 'Great Powers' which won the war of 1914-18; with the U.S.A. and Japan as absentees -- but, on the other hand, with a picturesque assemblage of minor States called in as associates, ostensibly upon a footing of equality. These Great Powers are 'leagued' together in this way to defend the 'victory', or what is generally referred to as the *status quo* -- that is the principle of *no change*.

Hints are sometimes thrown out by individual politicians (Sir Samuel Hoare, for instance) that 'elasticity' is not entirely ruled out: that some minor alterations in the *status quo might* be entertained, following upon suitable negotiations. Also, the famous Covenant recognizes in passing that modifications -- seeing that the perfect wisdom of those who draughted it was susceptible, theoretically, to the law of time and change -- might eventually (after riots and insurrections it may be assumed, and subject to every conceivable safeguard) be agreed to. -- But these are pious asides. There is no effective, properly constituted, international tribunal before which the suffering nations can bring, however well-founded, a grievance. And no step has been taken

to set up such a tribunal. The ruthless spirit of *no change* prejudices, experience has shown, any case submitted by a 'Have-not' at the bar of the 'Haves'.

But the existence, as a cardinal point of political doctrine, of this inflexibly unprogressive principle, is a very great irritant. It has been productive, as was to be expected, of constellations of unresolved disputes. These have collected, like a fungus, about every clause, nay every letter, of the treaty of peace.

This stagnant principle imposed upon European society, when the nations at last laid down their arms in 1918, is indicated as the sufficient *casus belli* in the present international crisis. For our statesmen profess to be unable to adjust these differences. That, they say, would involve an alteration of that which is *ipso facto* unalterable.

It is generally agreed, nevertheless, among non-statesmen, that there is something which requires explaining about all this rather sudden eruption of righteousness, which we have witnessed during the last year or so, on the part of our politicians: especially so when it is considered how much as a matter of course, with what cryptic deliberation, this terrible event is being prepared by our genevan covenanters, in whose hands rests the enormous issue of peace or war.

Without defining very clearly the kind, or extent, of the 'disaster' that this new Great War would entail, the general run of educated men (your professional man, or four-figure business-man — not your seven-figure one, who is another kettle of fish altogether) affirms that such a war would leave White Civilization even more hopelessly bankrupt than at present, even more savage, fatalistic, and helpless: and that, therefore, it could be said that such a war would probably 'be the end' of that

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civilization. That is what the 'moderate' man, the average man of the more educated variety, affirms.

The two extremist minorities are both far better educated politically than is this average 'moderate' man. This is unfortunate, but it is invariably the case. The plain man of Anglosaxony is *not* a political animal. He is *l'homme moyen sensuel* in almost the pure state.

Of the two extremists to 'left' and to 'right', respectively, of the 'moderate' majority-man, the latter, the extremist of the 'right', agrees with him (upon the subject of Great War No. 2) and the former does not.

For the former (he of the 'left') White Civilization is itself a 'disaster' of the first magnitude, and it can be most expeditiously wound up by a universal war — upon such a scale as would admit of no, however crippled and partial, survival. But another Great War, coming so quickly upon the heels of the last, would surely give the *coup de grâce*, he argues. Such an event would secure the necessary *tabula rasa*, upon which a new, and fundamentally different (and, of course, *better*) society, could be built. To him, unless he be a busy unpractical christian, of the Lansbury kidney, the cost in human life and limb is immaterial. That is all for the greater glory, not of God, but of God-man.

The extremist of the 'right' is, very paradoxically indeed, as it would seem to the average reader, the most truly pacific person upon the stage, at the present juncture. As he is popularly represented to be the most warlike, this is a major complication, in arriving at an understanding of what is going forward to-day. Indeed, it partakes so much of paradox, that the plain man finds it very difficult to admit it into his mind as a bona fide fact. Seeing that it is a bona fide fact, however, and one

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f some significance, I will endeavour briefly to expose its rationale. It is not really so very abstruse, once you have got the hang of it.

§ 2

An introduction to the paradoxical outlook of the Extremist of the 'Right'

For this extremist of the 'right', then, White Civilization is not a 'disaster' at all. Or it is only a 'disaster' because of what the 'Banker's Olympus' — the decadent, irresponsible, democracies of the West — have allowed it to become. In his view, White Civilization took the wrong turning, so to speak. This, as far as England is concerned, was about a century ago (when the Reform Bill, say, set the seal of official success upon the industrial revolutionaries, and finally, when, in 1867, Disraeli wound up the old landed society of England — with the bemused assistance of the unfortunately not very clever gentlemen whom he was thereby so blandly liquidating).

Ever since that time 'White Civilization' in Great Britain — and in the other western democracies the same thing, or worse, has been going forward — has been consistently contradicting and stultifying itself: until at last, indeed, it has reached a point at which it has quite properly become a laughing stock, both for those who do not belong to it, and equally for the sardonic internationalist, dug in at its very heart.

In consequence, this enthusiastic and strong-minded extremist would forcibly rescue it, and put it upon the right road — the road that it *should*, according to him, have taken (when, confused, probably by the new complexities of the industrial revolution, it mistook its route).

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He would not, for his part, smash up the White tradition as would the men of the militant 'left'. He regards that tradition as being upon an altogether higher plane than the primitivism of the 'brave new world' of the Soviets, whose saurian spinal cord is the *materialist dialectic* of Marx. He would reincarnate the dynamic impulses of individual initiative and adventure, deriving from a higher centre than the impersonal automatisms of reptile life, exemplified by that retrograde 'dialectic' — impulses which were productive of all the great arts and sciences of the West, but which have been watered down, or suppressed, in the quantitative levelment of the mechanical age; and which have been betrayed by the professional politicians of the western parliamentary democracies.

These politicians, as he sees the matter, stand for the great capitalist interests — which interests, instinctively, or deliberately, seek, hand in hand with the Soviets, to *trustify* all human society.

I know that for the plain man this account of things is far more difficult to understand than is socialist doctrine. But it is my business here to state it; for these are opinions that are fanatically held by very great numbers of people to-day (in other countries) and especially by the young generations. All said and done, the Townsend Scheme must appear to the average Englishman as sheer lunacy; yet it has millions of adherents in the United States.

Here, as a matter of fact, we find conveniently in our path — and instead of ignoring it I suggest that we pause to examine it — the *second* great paradox offered us by the political philosophy of this man of the extreme 'right'. In the popular fancy he features (largely in consequence of the view of him broadcast by the majority of the Press)

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as an implacable enemy of personal freedom. But that, at least, is not his version of the matter, but very much the opposite.

He announces himself, on the contrary, as the champion of the Small Man in his struggle against Big Business, and its intolerable and 'soul-destroying' oppressions: the champion of the creative worker — the damn-fool who *does the work*, whatever that work may be — gripped in the tentacles of 'loan-capital'. (For he discriminates between 'Loan-capital', or the super-usury of International Finance, and the relatively small, concrete capital of agriculture and industry — freed from the *Zinsknechtschaft* which lives parasitically upon it.)

By Freedom, he declares, we latter-day democrats of England, America, and France, understand *freedom for the bird of prey*, of irresponsible Finance, to throttle and bleed to death its victims. And for that sort of freedom, he agrees, he has not much use.

'We all declare for liberty,' as Lincoln said, 'but in using the same word we do not all mean the same thing. We assume the word liberty may mean for each man to do as he pleases with himself, and the product of his labour; while with others the same word may mean for some men to do as they please with other men, and the product of other men's labour.' — That is it.

In the ordinary way, it may be, there would be no particular object in devoting our valuable time to a study of these wild notions. But to-day we are compelled to do so, I think; not necessarily because we wish to 'see the other fellow's point of view', but because that point of view has taken to itself guns and warplanes in self-defence (since of these unpleasant engines of 'peaceful' coercion we had for so long such an exclusive and jealous

monopoly) and *insists* (still hat in hand, and in a voice of studied deference, but with a rather determined look in the eye, all the same!) that we should give it some small regard.

The Nazi, for instance, as also the Blackshirt, proclaims himself the champion of the son of the soil, threatened everywhere with bureaucratic 'collectivization'. And in the same way, he affirms, he is the champion of the individual (of the 'sovereign') state, threatened by that dark twin of *collectivization*, namely *collective security*.

For him *collective security* is merely, in the international field, what all forms of marxist *collectivization* are in the internal and domestic order of the state. The mere monotonous, parrot-like repetition of the word *collective* should sufficiently betray the family tie that exists between them, he tells us.

From the standpoint of all these extremists on the 'right' our Mr. Eden (to take a specific case) is merely the hustling, immaculately-dressed, nicely-spoken, agent of the great international interests. He is something like an insolent *commissar* come into the 'backward' rural areas to round-up groups of disaffected 'individualist' peasants, and pop them squealing and cursing into the 'farms' of the 'collective system', as decreed by the all-powerful central authority. That Mr. Eden is not that, we know, but that on occasion he must *look* like that, to one of those smarting beneath what they consider a national injustice, is not so difficult to understand.

The main point, however, is, that this extremist of the 'right' regards himself, quite as sincerely and unshakably as any 'village Hampden' could do, as the embodiment of Liberty. He is a friend of Man as opposed to Superman — of State as opposed to Super-state.

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To see ourselves as others see us is always salutary: and we of the democratic West are unquestionably regarded to-day, by these strange new extremists of the 'right', as bullies, hypocrites, slave-drivers (only *White* slave-drivers — we outclass all others in treating members of our own race, but such as belong to poorer nations than ours, as if they were 'natives'): and, finally, we are regarded as short-sighted ruffians into the bargain. For (argue our critics) he who lives by the knout shall eventually perish by the knout!

Painful as it must be to us to take note of these outlandish opinions, it is nevertheless true that they are quite sincerely entertained by what in France is called '*les partis de l'ordre*' — the representatives, all over Europe, of the '*pays réel*', in contradistinction to the '*pays légal*'.

§ 3

The Terms 'Right', 'Left', and 'Centre'

At this point, at the risk of the reader feeling that he is being forcibly fed, as he goes along, with facts requiring more time than I give him for assimilation, I must stop again for a moment to examine one fact (or group of facts), at least, which, if ignored, might be a fatal source of confusion.

As I was using just now the terms '*pays réel*' and '*pays légal*', familiar to contemporary French journalism (the *real* nation, namely, and the *legal* nation) I remembered how tirelessly, in France, the extremist of the 'right' will draw one's attention to the extraordinary numerical insignificance of what he calls contemptuously 'the legal nation' — the nation as it is presented to us in '*la Grande Presse*', so called. This handful of 'famous'

politicians — this conspicuously advertised personnel of artificial power — comprises but a tiny section of the general community. It is little more than a large circus. It is the salaried circus (all carefully trained and reliable mountebanks) of the great money interests. A few dozen 'indispensable' political 'giants' (Buisson, Paul-Boncour, Herriot, Mandel, Flandin, Chautemps, etc.) who indefatigably chase one another in and out of office — these are the factitious leaders of a stage-army, as it were. So we are informed by the scurrilous parisian 'right'-winger.

Really much the same thing, of course, could be said of any parliamentary democracy — one which, in fact, is a plutocracy. But it was not this fact, but one related to it, which I felt should be made available without delay. The reality concealed by such terms as 'moderate majority', or 'centrist majority', or 'moderate' bulk of the nation, was what I felt demanded immediate definition. We should not go on using these terms for any longer than we can help (and this applies to 'right-wing' and 'left-wing' equally) without familiarizing ourselves with the various sorts of reality with which, from time to time, they correspond.

Far too small a number of people are aware of the fact, for instance, that a 'centre' party, in the politics of a parliamentary democracy, is not always in the centre. The centre of gravity may be anywhere. Further, the 'moderate majority' of a nation is not always even in a majority. The majority may be in what is a typically 'minority' position: and one of the 'extremes' may quite well be in the centre (as is the case to-day, both in the Senate, and in the Chamber of Deputies, in France, where a virulently leftish commercial *mafia* are anchored right in the centre of the elective system).

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But the 'moderation' of 'the moderate man' may be almost anything, according to where, and in what period, he may be discovered exercising his 'moderation'. It may be characterized by an extreme and violent social snobbery — as it was in mid-victorian England; or by the tenacious dilute of jacobinism that is typical of the Third Republic in France.

There are democratic political systems, as the late Lord Bryce pointed out, of every conceivable colouration, and of differing degrees of pure democratic principle. (Of course, none are purely democratic — that is self-evidently a chimera.) 'There are plenty of republics which are not democracies, and some monarchies . . . which are.' Or, again: 'Is the name (democracy) to be applied equally to Portugal and Belgium, in which women do not vote, and to Norway and Germany, in which they do? Could anybody deny it to France, merely because she does not grant the suffrage to women?

Now, some of these parliamentary democracies have a big central majority, of 'moderate' opinion, with small militant wings, to 'right' and to 'left'. Some have quite small 'centres', on the other hand, with large and powerful wings. Or there may quite well be only *one* wing, worth the name. There may be a great big all-powerful 'left', for instance. In Spain, as the elections of 1934 to Cortes Constituyentis seemed to demonstrate, there is an overpowering 'right' wing (which, however, was not allowed to govern — the '*pays légal*' the minority, was too strong for it! So the left wing grew, until in the February elections (1936) the ballot revealed two 'extremist' wings about numerically equal, and practically no centre).

Or, again, you can have a big vague centre (calling

itself 'right') about equally balancing with a big, not very extreme, 'left' wing (a small rudimentary 'right' sluggishly embedded where the 'centre' reaches its right-hand limit. This is what you have at present in the British Parliament.

But the terms 'left' and 'right', as well, may be exceedingly misleading. It has often been remarked that Nazi doctrine and communist doctrine have much in common. Some people declare, in fact, that they can discern no difference between them. The *Manchester Guardian* (a 'Left Wing' paper) last year described the society that was in process of formation in Germany as 'a classless society'. And one can scarcely see a pillar of the tory 'right' wing in England — say Sir William Page-Croft — embracing Dr. Goebbels as a political blood-brother!

The use of the terms 'left' and 'right' to describe the main political cleavage in any European parliament was borrowed in the first instance from the French. This usage had its origin in the fact that formerly, in the Chamber of Deputies, the conservatives sat on the right hand of the presiding officer, the liberals on the left.

'Right' and 'Left', as descriptive political terms, have a great advantage (in being suitably abstract) over such tags as 'radical', 'progressive' or 'democratic', which travel about, up and down the political spectrum, one day signifying a blood-red bolshie, the next an apoplectic red-necked tory die-hard — the retired military club-man of the conventional cartoonist's fancy.

So much for these terms, however, and for the mercurial and diverse reality which they are apt to conceal.

§ 4

The big soft 'Centre' of the Anglosaxon Democracies and the last General Election

In the Anglosaxon democracies the political 'centre' is large and very soft. It is emotionally coloured by an ancient and tenacious Cobdenism which would cause the extremist of the 'right' to locate it within the dominions of the 'left', but which causes all extremists of the 'left' to curse it for its inveterate conservatism. 'We know now indeed,' Lord Acton wrote in 1880 to Mary Gladstone, 'that the British democracy is neither liberal nor conservative in its permanent convictions.' That is still extremely true — if you write 'socialist' where he put 'liberal', to bring the terminology up to date.

Politically, the British democracy — or it would be better to say the English democracy — is strictly speaking nothing. It is neutral — it is vegetative. Politically speaking, the English democracy is almost 'a natural'. It is concerned with the problem of bread-and-butter, procreation, crimes of violence, and ball-games.

It is scarcely necessary to say that this has not always been the case. *What* it was knocked the political stuffing out of the Englishman — to that question we are not required here to find an answer. Disraeli, 'the tory leader who made England a democracy', also invented jingo imperialism for her. He created at one sweep of his magic wand those rather contradictory cousins, Mr. Baldwin and Mr. Kipling. This double-barrelled gift, and all it has entailed, accounts for a good deal. But a century or two earlier such insolent presents would have been rather roughly returned to the person who had had

the effrontery to make them. Then, again, ever since Waterloo was 'won upon the playing fields of Eton', of course, the playing-field has gone on expanding and expanding; until 'playing the game', as too hypnotic a slogan, has perhaps rotted the sense of reality of the average Briton.

Eschewing these speculations, however, we can safely affirm that the political responses of this 'natural' are all emotional ones; that, although very 'insular', he is yet not nationalist, in the manner of the Irishman, but confusedly internationalist — because he vaguely has that empire-feeling still, so thoughtfully provided for him by the ingenious Mr. Disraeli, and is accustomed to the sensation of co-citizenship with the Redskin and the Blackamoor, the Jew and the Maori.

Such is the British man of the majority; the 'real' England is, in fact, not so very unlike the 'legal' England. And the prospect of a new Great War has left the average Englishman typically inert.

But in the autumn of last year he was given a General Election, somewhat to his surprise. He was to 'decide' what was to be what for the next five years. It was not a proper election: it was rather in the nature of a dishonest *referendum*, really, seeing that there was only one paramount issue, namely that of *Peace* or *War*.

He had to sign a blank cheque for the latter — it would look better, if it came to a 'scrap' (not necessarily with Italy — perhaps with Germany) if he had as it were duly signed his own death-warrant beforehand, on the dotted line — and so *whatever* occurred it would be his own fault and nobody could complain that they had not been duly consulted.

Naturally, the General Election left him no alterna-

tive choice: on this issue of war and peace — the only issue — a uniform mass of candidates were stuck up before him by Mr. Baldwin and the socialists. The poor fellow could scarcely tell which was which. There, shoulder to shoulder — and with their backs against the wall, a defiant '*We'll show them, if they come too much of it!*' on all their bulldog lips — stood the embattled cast of the jingo democracy of G.B. at the Polls.

Any tentative ideas the more reflective voter may have had, therefore, on the subject of 'non-interference in matters that did not concern Great Britain', were nipped in the bud. There was no one to vote for on the Peace ticket — the two unanimous and fraternal party machines (the 'national' and the 'socialist') saw to that. Only for the ticket disingenuously emblazoned 'Peace' (and there is all the difference between death and life in these inverted commas!) was a vote possible — unless the voter happened to be in Mr. Maxton's constituency, or that of the kind-hearted but ineffective Mr. Lansbury.

But '*Such is democracy!*' as our incorrigible friend of the extreme 'right' would exclaim.

'You have your vote, yes. But since you are presented only with candidates of *one* sort, standing for one and the same policy, what is the use of your vote to you! You might just as well be living under a totalitarian system — much better, in fact, for at least you would not be made a fool of! This standardized — "rationalized" — one-policy parliament of yours, like one great corporation or trust, is the same thing, after all, as *one* man! Why not spare yourself the trouble of electing all these dreary yes-men, cut to one pattern, and vote in *one* man to do the job! (A 'dictator'? No, no more a dictator than you have got already!) And at the end of it all what happened? The

electorate was roundly lectured and abused in the Press for its "apathy", was it not—because so many people refrained from exercising their right to vote (for which Suffragettes used to chain themselves to the railings of the Houses of Parliament): and, to cap everything, the "free" electors of Great Britain are now threatened with a heavy fine, the next time this farce comes round, if they omit to vote! That would be the finishing touch to this uncommonly freedom-respecting system!

I am obliged to confess that this unseemly tirade of our extremist of the 'right' appears to me to be not without some shadow of justification.

But of course your democrat could reply that the 'freedom' of democracy entails unpleasant duties (like voting; we lag behind Australia — we should have a fine for those who are ballot-shy), and that the man who is in enjoyment of its unique benefits must be prepared for *sacrifice*: he must be ready indeed (especially just about now) to lay down his life to preserve it. — To which, doubtless, Mr. Extremist-of-the-Right would retort that in that case in what did it differ from other systems, where heads are counted less frequently, and the virtues of discipline more frankly exalted; and the emphasis thrown on human dignity rather than upon human comfortableness?

Observing these disputes, momentarily, from a judicious distance, all we can say is that these are hard times, and whether you are labelled 'democrat' or something with a less 'cushy' sound (how easily one drops, these days, into the slang of the trenches!) yours will all the same be no bed of roses, and you will not be politely deferred to upon such little subjects as whether you would like to say it with bombs or with bouquets.

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For, to conclude, you will have very little *say* at all in the matter, one way or the other. Your preference for *blood* as an argument will be taken for granted!

§ 5

‘Great Wars’ and ‘Great Slumps’ Nos. 1 and 2

We can now return — a little better equipped, I hope, to unravel that paradox — to the attitudes of the ‘right’ extremist, and of the ‘moderate’ majority, respectively, towards a new Great War. The former would regard such an event with even less favour than would the plain blunt man: and it is easy to see why, I think you will at present agree.

The extremist of the ‘right’ understands very well — as does his ‘leftie’ antagonist, too, naturally — that a new Great War would clear the way for a return to primitive conditions — to *really* primitive conditions; the *tabula rasa* which is the desideratum of the marxist.

But you do not have to be an extremist, or to reflect very deeply, after all, to see how this must infallibly happen. The ‘slump’ which has succeeded to Great War No. 1 saw masses of out-of-works flooding the gutters of our great cities: herds of unemployed people, both blackcoated and manual workers, camped in shacks and wigwams, outside Sydney and Melbourne. The same sort of thing occurred in America. Within a twelvemonth the seemingly unassailable prosperity of the New World suffered an unparalleled collapse. There are reported to be at present fifteen million people in receipt of relief in the United States. And everyone to-day has come to realize that this is not just a *temporary* slump. It is a universal breakdown of the out-of-date

AS THE 'RIGHT' SEES IT

money system, which our rulers insist upon retaining and working, in spite of the plain teaching of the facts. And, in consequence, great multitudes of people are condemned to a life as barbarous and objectless as that of the most primitive of the 'savages' whose territories the European nations, in the role of 'white conquerors' overran so short a time ago.

The states which will be confronting each other, when zero hour in due course arrives — if it should come to that — possess, on one side and the other, so terribly complete an *armamentarium* (and *one* of the opposing groups is composed of nations of desperate men, who will undoubtedly sell their lives extremely dearly, if they find themselves 'encircled' and attacked) that Great War No. 2 will be an even more hideous and costly massacre than Great War No. 1.

On the other hand, if Great Slump No. 1 has been and is the fearful paradox of 'want in the midst of plenty' — of savagery encompassing luxury — with which we are familiar, what will Great Slump No. 2 be like? *That* requires no second-sight to foretell. The Slump after Great War No. 2, if that comes to pass, will be an all-in slump. The marxist will have got his savagery and his wilderness — his *tabula rasa* — by the time the last gun has received its *Cease Fire*, if the guns, ever again, are allowed to go off in a major disturbance.

That the governments understand this well enough is proved by the speeches delivered from time to time by their representative ministers. Listen to Mr. Eden (speaking at Warwick, January 17th, 1936):

'If war should break out again on a major scale in Europe, it must bring the collapse of civilization, as we know it, in its wake.'

ATTITUDES TOWARDS NEXT WAR

That statement demonstrates that the Foreign Secretary is fully aware of what must ensue, once a major war should get started. In the French Press it has been estimated that such a war might last for twenty years. What at least we can be quite sure about is that the marxist interests would never allow it to stop, if they could help it, until it had made a Sahara of the world — until the 'catastrophic' doctrine of Karl Marx should be satisfied up to the hilt. Yet there are quantities of people everywhere, of the greatest influence, bending all their energies to ensure just this 'catastrophe'. And there are many more whose daily actions can scarcely be described as pouring oil on troubled waters. They have another, and more incendiary, use for oil.

§ 6

Different attitudes towards Great War No. 2

It comes to this: '*The collapse of civilization, as we know it,*' is at stake, as Mr. Eden stated. It all depends, it is, I think, fair to assume, with what sort of eye you regard that threatened 'collapse'. For there are several clearly-defined positions from which this prospective event may be contemplated: and there are a great many rather *mixed* and obscure outlooks, betwixt and between.

If you are a communist, then it is plain sailing: a communist knows exactly what he wants, and is quite ready to avow it. If you are a communist you regard a new Great War with unqualified glee.

If, on the other hand, you are an extremist of the 'right', it is just the opposite. A new Great War can only play into the hands of the communist: and you are persuaded that those who are so busy preparing the ground

for this new Great War are either camouflaged communists, or dupes or tools of communism and of the great international interests who have compacted with the communists.

If you are a socialist, you regard the prospect of a new Great War, apparently, without misgiving — even with a certain stern anticipatory relish. But, whereas there is only *one* sort of communist, there are many different sorts of socialist: so this last statement has to be qualified considerably, to allow for that fact. There are many socialists who would welcome a new Great War as little as would the extremist of the 'right'.

But if you are a plain, blunt, democratic statesman how do you feel about the threat (or promise) of a new Great War *then* — if you are that strangest of all hybrids? That is by no means so easy to answer as at first sight it might seem.

Indeed, it is so difficult to answer — so much preparation is necessary, if one's answer is to be intelligible to the reader accustomed only to the cut-and-dried party-uplift — to one who has trodden only the orthodox paths of socialist, or of conservative, homiletic — that I will commence a new chapter, for I want to deal as adequately with this new exhibit as I have with the 'Extremist of the "Right"'. To the latter I gave pride of place, partly on the principle that the humble should be exalted; and partly because the true standpoint of this 'Extremist of the "Right"' is so little understood, because so seldom stated; and because I regard it as of very great importance that the general public (who are neither 'extremists' of the 'right' nor of the 'left', nor yet plain, blunt, democratic statesmen) should be well informed, and not one-sidedly informed.

AS THE PLAIN, BLUNT, DEMOCRATIC STATESMAN SEES IT

§ I

The Extremists of the 'Left' and 'Right' change places

WHAT does it feel like to be an eminent statesman in an old parliamentary western democracy in the year 1936? Well, first of all, you would be fully aware of the growing confusion and muddle within the system which it is your thankless task to have to pretend to work. The old machine creaks and groans beneath you; and you feel no doubt rather like one of those aged London taxi-drivers whose lot it is to ply for hire a cab which is so dilapidated that even the meanest horse-vehicle outstrips it.

You see on all hands, from Helingsfors to Tokyo, from the Kremlin to Rio de Janeiro, the liberal democratic idea, the product of the nineteenth century, fiercely scoffed at; and you sullenly scoff back. You scoff at all dictators and dictators-in-embryo. In one place you see parliamentary democracy laughed at but tolerated, as a corrupt piece of Anglosaxon humbug that had perhaps best be accepted lest worse betide: and in another place you see it impatiently spurned, as a self-satisfied sham, a mere bit of old political lumber for which the new generations have no use.

All this is distinctly humiliating and unpleasant, up to a point. It would be, that is, if you were not sleepy and

thick-skinned: but it *does*, in a way, put your back up — as much as your back is capable of that impulsive reaction.

So, to return to that, will the notion of yet another Great War, or Great Adventure, appeal to you, or not? — Well, under these circumstances, you cannot but regard a violent universal ‘collapse’ of all things, it is to be supposed, with a certain lofty resignation: hoping for the best of course, but knowing only too well that *your* best can be but a poor thing.

But there is more than this: for with war goes revolution, as you know quite well. There again a certain lofty resignation is only to be expected of you. But *what sort of revolution* is no concern of yours (as it is of the mass of us). Indeed, the worse the better, as you see it!

Just as you have not the honesty, or the energy, to insist that the system you pretend to work be brought up to date; so you probably have not the energy — or the effrontery — to run it without a *dash* or two (just a suspicion) of Red somewhere in your political make-up; just to show that you are not *entirely* on the wrong side of the fence, and *nothing* but a hardened old fellow-clubman of Colonel Blimp.

And, meanwhile, any plain, blunt, democratic statesman knows that there is only one course open to him if he wants to stop in the limelight (for he is intimately acquainted with the people who work the limelight — he perforce is hand in glove with the publicity-monopolists); and, even if he is rich and can disregard mere salary, Office is very sweet!

The above preliminary sketch of the psychology of democratic statesmanship comes nearer the mark, it is my belief, than the more ‘extremist’ and lurid view of it: in which it is regarded (either by the ‘extremist’ of the

‘LEFT’ AND ‘RIGHT’ CHANGE PLACES

‘right’ or of the ‘left’) as the play-world of out-and-out intriguers, or machiavellian puppets. Indeed, I am sure it is nearer the mark where the English statesmen are concerned. I do not believe that they are less to be trusted than the general run of men.

But if, at this point, we advert again to the picture of the world provided for us by Mr. Rightwing Extremist, it is because, like him, we are out to expose ‘democracy’ and all its works; and it is unquestionably through his eyes that we obtain the most uncompromising glimpses of the parliamentary system as it at present exists, and of those who are at present working it.

Formerly the communists had almost a monopoly of this hostile criticism. It used to be the communists to whom you would have to go if you wanted *really* a bit of plain unvarnished truth about democracy. But those days are past. The ‘common front’ has put an end to all that.

Indeed, the communists are no longer the party of revolution, in any true sense, at all. They are to-day the master-class, the party of orthodoxy. The ‘outcasts’ of 1936 are the extremists of the ‘right’. (That important fact it is, incidentally, necessary to grasp, in order to orientate yourself in the political world of to-day — if you are to avoid knocking on the wrong doors all the time, and if you are not to find yourself in the presence of the master of the house, when you thought you were at the door of the valet, and vice versa).

At the present time it is the extremist of the ‘right’, and he alone, from whom we can expect any really uncompromising criticism of so-called democratic institutions. That is why we have so often to turn to him, if we desire the opinion of a third party regarding the latest policies

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of our masters. It does not at all follow that our aims are
identical with those of the militant 'right'-winger.

§ 2

More important than the next War, the next Peace!

To arrive at a true estimate of the plain, blunt, democratic statesman, and what ultimately we have to expect of him, we could not have chosen a more propitious moment. For we find him in the act of handling a problem which is the most fundamental problem of all — that of Peace and War.

Every human and political weakness must infallibly be revealed at such a juncture. And I think it is fair to say that those of us who were most sceptical about the bonafides of democracy — as practised by the English politicians of to-day — cannot but have been amazed at what we have seen. The men who are working this callous and oppressive system have scarcely troubled to mask their activities. The startlingly *undemocratic* nature of those activities must have revolted the democratic instincts which all of us have inherited, as much as it must have disgusted such men as prefer their medicine, if they must take it, without some sickly admixture to disguise it. But in the present case the prescription has been so artlessly contrived, the cant has been so openly administered to drown the deadly taste, that it has been in the nature of an insult to one's palate, apart from the fact that on the spot the stomach has convulsively rejected it.

In all these preparations for war, even more than the 'disasters of war', it is the consideration of *what will come after* that should count with us. This must never be lost sight of: we cannot insist too often that, side by side with

THE NEXT PEACE!

the picture of another (and worse) war, should be placed the picture of the 'Peace' that must succeed it. And even the most slovenly and short-sighted statesman cannot pretend that that aspect of the matter is not present to his mind. The man in the street is apt to think (if he thinks at all) only of the ordeal that awaits him, by bomb and shell. But the statesman, in the nature of things, sees, along with that, the aftermath: it is his business to do that and he cannot plead ignorance, or disclaim foresight; for such foresight is inherent in his training. It is a routine matter with the gentlemen who are arranging for our next Armageddon, to look beyond the bombs to the bankruptcy, and to divine what that must entail.

As I have said, there is no more instructive analysis of this *afterwards* of Great War No. 2. than that provided by the 'right' extremist. In that respect he really has a great deal to teach us. He is also very efficient in dissecting the arrangements being made against this *afterwards*, in the period immediately *before*. So let us use his eyes; since he is one of the three great principals on the stage at the present time, and his standpoint with regard to all these events must be of decisive importance.

A new Great War, then, would really be a war that would end war. It would, if it were thorough and prolonged enough, *end war* all right: but what sort of peace would be there for us all at the end of it? That it would be 'Peace' with the terrible inverted commas of Mr. Litvinov is plain enough — unless, of course, the forces of 'order' won the day. (For, after all, the 'real' earth, instead of the 'legal' earth, might get the upper hand; it is impossible to say. In such a deadly, universal scuffle anything might happen).

The organization of what Mr. Belloc has called the

Servile State would be the probable outcome of a new Great War, in which the collectivizing forces of Geneva-cum-Moscow triumphed. The white nations of Europe and America, leaderless and bankrupt, would be as helpless as the small tribal communities of Indians brought into subjection, and dragooned into a marvellously symmetrical servitude, by the Incas of Peru. There would be no more talk of 'freedom' then! Democracy would have democratized itself off the surface of the earth.

§ 3

The plain, blunt, democratic statesman and 'Empire'

But what is the attitude of the plain, blunt, democratic statesman to this famous 'Empire' he is supposed to administer? That, again, is not an easy question. In the eighteenth century he would have been temperamentally a 'King's Man,' in the nineteenth an 'Empire builder'. But 'we are all socialists to-day', as Sir John Simon has said. So to-day he is some sort of 'socialist', and as such, is exceedingly shy of this huge imperialist white elephant which dogs his steps with its embarrassing requirements.

As far as the present situation is concerned, it is scarcely necessary to say that such an institution as the British Empire would not survive a new Great War in any form at all, or not for very long. But even as it is we have reached an impasse, it seems, as regards our huge network of colonies. *Morally* they are no longer 'ours', if you see what I mean.

For, once the British Government plumped for the full-blooded collectivist morality of Geneva, in the summer of 1935, the British statesmen responsible for that

step must have realized that a state of affairs in which there were *Haves* and *Have-nots* could not survive the fierce moralist glare directed upon these problems by all the arc-lights of the Press: that in falling upon their knees before the Ark of the Covenant of the League they were, to all intents and purposes, casting all the various units of the British Empire into the collectivist pool — into the internationalist melting-pot.

Clearly an untenable position must result if you proclaim to the world at large: 'There shall be no more "colonizing" — understand that! *We* have done all the colonizing that is to be done! Henceforth everyone must stay at home, please, and cultivate his garden!' You cannot say that. No statesman could seriously hope to get away with such a declaration.

The whole-hogging adherence of the British Government to the *collectivist* ideology of Geneva means that the British Empire, as it appears upon the world-map to-day, is already a thing of the past. Potentially, it has passed into the *collectivist* melting-pot of world-planning or corporate internationalism. (For, be it observed, no corporate state would be so corporative, nor any totalitarian state so thoroughly totalitarian, as the super-state envisaged at Geneva — a United States of the World, in short, controlled by a highly centralized internationalist executive.)

§ 4

The democratic 'nationalism' of disintegration

But, in this connection, it can be said that disintegration has in fact, started at home -- at the 'heart of Empire'. Ireland is in process of evolution into an independent republic. Scottish nationalism is to-day a real political issue. (And, of course, a Pictish kingdom in the east must ultimately be allowed for -- since what we call Scotland is not, historically, only the land of the Scot.) Why, even Welsh nationalism has lifted up its bardic head, and emitted one or two very disagreeable grunts, regarding the English connection. 'A foreign show' is how the English hegemony has been described by these youngest of the Fenians.

Thus, at the very moment when the various principalities and kingdoms of the German *Reich* have achieved unity under Nazi 'nationalism', an opposite order of 'nationalism' has effected, or is effecting, in these islands a fractioning and disruption.

One might almost suppose that the law of *Divide and Rule* is already at work, with us -- in preparation for the *collectivist* world-rule that is being hatched at Geneva.

But, as we decentralize, and fall apart into independent fragments; and as we abandon our 'sovereign' rights to the new 'reign of law,' projected by the powerful internationalist caucus at Geneva, we observe, with mixed feelings, *other* states doing, as I have said, the opposite. At this we grow very angry indeed, and our ministers and plenipotentiaries never cease to admonish and threaten those contrary states: or, alternatively, they

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implore them to reconsider this wicked *individualist* behaviour, and to come inside the *collectivist* fold and cease to be so obstinately 'sovereign'. A rather farcical, but extremely dangerous, situation, you must, I think, agree!

§ 5

What sort of thoughts do the Men in Power think?

But let us now address ourselves exclusively to the men in power: for even more than the views of the 'right', or of the 'left', it is the views of the political Middlemen that we *must* discover more about. What they think is far less obvious: and it is quite different to what the Plain Man supposes (for of course the 'plainness and bluntness' of the democratic statesman is the merest camouflage).

Already I have opened the door to some extent into that arcanum. Let me now endeavour to push it wide open — even, if it must be, with a sometimes unceremonious hand. Yes, let us direct our scrutiny upon those democratic politicians in whom power to-day is vested; and let us see if we cannot discover what they in very fact think about it all. Let us at least essay it — for they are to-day about the most difficult of the lot to understand!

It would be a very odd experience to be in the confidence — really in the confidence — of a prominent British or French cabinet minister of 1936 — or a Foreign Office chief.

My word, if you and I knew what M. Sarraut (of Yugoslavian fame) or Sir Robert Vansittart knows, shouldn't we feel a little like the Man with the Glaring Eyes! It is probably just as well that we don't. But there is no reason why we should not attempt to get some rough idea of

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what *sort* of thoughts they think. 'It is a free country!' as we are accustomed to say: and speculation is not yet *Aufstrengst Verboten!*

Invariably their 'lips are sealed', as they put it: these democratic statesmen move about with a ponderous importance, big with great secrets of state. No porter of a Star Chamber could be more portentous. They are as secret at the least as the most secretive of their Secret Service agents. They are veritable sphinxes — but let us interrogate them, and see what we can make of their riddles. We can but try.

Of course, for what that is worth, we have the record of what periodically they let drop — not very illuminating, but still! Little set speeches embodying what it is right and proper that the little children should be told, now and then, to keep them quiet!

'If war should break out again on a major scale in Europe, it must bring the collapse of civilization, as we know it, in its wake.' What does that mean? It is typical of what they *say*. The implication is, of course, the quite conventional one, that the 'collapse of civilization, as we know it', would be unthinkable — and a thing at all cost to be averted.

That is the sort of thing they *say*: but what do the Baldwins, Titulescos, Edens, Beneshes, and Herriots *think*? We all know what the socialist, and the communist, thinks. We are given no opportunity of forgetting *that* — an enormous and ever-growing literature is there to inform us, *ad nauseam*, of their plans for our welfare, and what they propose to do with us if we don't do what they tell us. And as to the extremist of the 'right', I flatter myself that I have begun to give you an insight into what *he* is apt to be turning over in his mind.

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But what on earth does the democratic statesman think? About that no treatises are written. About that the man in the street (the man who is, heaven help him! supposed to be responsible for the parliamentary oligarch) has very few means of guessing.

§ 6

How the democratic statesman goes one better than the dictators

That the latest representative of western parliamentary democracy does not regard *himself* as 'decadent', or anything unpleasant of that sort, goes without saying. Very much the reverse: he seems as pleased as Punch with himself. He may not have the ostentatious trappings of power of one of these dictator-fellows, certainly! But none the less he *feels* just as much the cat's pyjamas (in his quiet and crafty way — almost, if it did not sound too disobliging, in his *underhand* way, one might describe it) as any of these swaggering quacks, dressed up to look like Napoleon or Siegfried!

But, what is more to the point, this democratic statesman possesses a well-defined, though of course not popularly advertised, policy, corresponding to the attitude outlined above. He believes — and the political journalists who follow his star will resolutely assert — that by other (by quieter and more 'constitutional') methods, he is destined to achieve all that the most successful 'fascist' has done by the crude procedure of the *coup d'état*. By more occult — more subtle and intelligent — methods, he will achieve what elsewhere has been achieved by open and clumsy methods of force. *And why use force, when it can all be done by kindness?*

Fascist revolution is not suited to the English people —

such is the argument of the British parliamentary statesman and his henchmen. But the undeniable benefits of such an 'authoritarian' regime as that of Hitler or Mussolini can be secured without anyone being aware of the change! It is, in fact, quite surprising how *totalitarian* you can be without anybody so much as guessing that they are a whit less free than they were before! It is quite remarkable what insolent and 'ruthless' power you can exercise if you want to (and if that power be suitably veiled and disguised) without the man in the street being any the wiser! — or, indeed, having the slightest inkling of what you are about!

It is a question, merely, of method. At bottom it is a matter of *taste*, really, that is all.

So the democratic statesman is apt to consider himself a far more cunning and clever fellow than any of these 'Sawdust Caesars!' No need of the emblems and trappings of power — the banners, the *fascies*, the ermine and purple! All that is 'out of date' (just as colonial expeditions are 'an anachronism').

Dressed like — and indeed resembling a little — George Robey in private life, your great parliamentary leader, indistinguishable from any other 'Mr. Everyman', can pass measures of the most *revolutionary* nature. Day after day — between two rounds of golf — under the very nose of any modern democracy whatever, he can do this. Why, he could wipe out Magna Carta and no one would notice it: he could abolish the Habeas Corpus, and all that would happen would be that a few stuffy old clubmen who out of sheer *désœuvrement* had been sullenly watching him, would write a little indignantly to *The Times*! While they are busy gaping at the All Blacks or goggling at a cup tie, he can do just what he likes with the

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ancient liberties of the people — just as much as old Hitler or old Mussolini could ever do! (Not so much as Stalin, perhaps — in Stalin he has met his master — to Stalin the sturdy parliamentarian ‘takes off his hat!’ No; he cannot line ‘em up in a prison yard and machine gun them out of hand, if they ask ‘the Revolution’ for six-pence a week rise in wages. But then Stalin is in a class by himself! Ah, *there* is power for you in very fact — in the absolute; in its platonic, heavenly perfection!)

As to ‘democracy’, the democratic statesman is, of course, under no illusions about *that*. How could he be? He knows quite well that anything can be called ‘democracy’. It tickles him to death to hear his friends the Bolshies referring to *their* little show as a ‘democracy’! That is distinctly mirth-making! And when he has occasion to refer, in a speech, to communist Russia as one of the principal ‘peace-loving nations’ (in contradistinction to those fire-eating fascist regimes) he cannot help but squint a little — for are not the armies of the Hammer and Sickle (with more than the legendary ferocity of the hosts of the Crescent) laying waste half of China at this very moment? Is not Chiang-kai-Chek much more a ‘victim of aggression’ than ever Hailé Selassie could be? Have not great Chinese cities been sacked over and over again, and is not a considerable proportion of the revenue of the Nanking government squandered annually in keeping these Muscovite armies in check? Or is a war any more peaceful because it is civilly labelled ‘civil’, again; and was not Captain Prestes’ little operation in Brazil the other day a rather compromising piece of Soviet ‘peacefulness’ after all — not to mention the jolly old Red goings-on in Sinkiang, Mexico, the Asturias, etc. etc.? And what (dago-like)

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those Uruguayan newspapers indignantly describe as Litvinov's 'insolent buffoonery' at Geneva does not seem to *him* (our 'broadminded' democrat) insolent buffoonery. Not at all. It seems to him a mere display of an exquisite *sense of humour* — almost English in its understanding of the truly droll! But then Litvinov is a great dear and speaks English almost as well as a Cambridge don!

So the first impulse of surprise to which one is liable, upon observing so much easy geniality and self-satisfaction in the manner of our democratic statesmen, should be promptly checked. That is a very naive reaction. If *you* happened to be one of those gentlemen, you would have plenty of things to keep you amused! *Il y a à quoi rigoler dans le monde moderne!* there is no doubt about that.

§ 7

Question-mark! WHY should Democracies wish to make the World safe for Communism?

Ah, if we only knew what *they* knew, these democratic statesmen of ours, we should be thinking some rather funny thoughts, in one way and another! But we don't. So if we want to arrive at a plausible picture of what goes on inside these stately statesmenlike heads, we must resort to an indirect approach. We must arrive at it by an analysis of what they *do* — and of course what other people do, and what they are fully aware that they do — and we must juxtapose all this readily accessible material. There is quite enough of it for our purpose. In the end I am sure that we shall be able to assert, with some degree of confidence: 'Since these men act after such and such a fashion, they must therefore *think* after such

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and such a fashion, too.' And, with a modicum of dramatic skill, it should not be difficult for us to reproduce what must be the tenor of their private thoughts. And a very amusing thought-stream we shall find it to be!

First of all, let us turn to what is the most difficult thing of all to understand about the behaviour of these politicians, with their much-advertised democratic principles and this passion for liberty which is so intense as to drive them incessantly into actions that are, to say the least of it, Quixotic. What is perhaps the central problem of all, in contemporary politics, is involved.

The problem to which I refer is the rather paradoxical nature of the *modus vivendi* subsisting between the Scarlet Woman of Moscow and the smug Pickwicks (or must we say Pecksniffs) of the western world.

All along it has been a source of bewilderment, to many simple-hearted persons, to observe the readiness and alacrity with which the great humanitarian democracies of the West forgot and forgave. One would have expected them to be much snootier, for a much longer period — before settling down cheek by jowl with Russian communism, upon such good neighbourly terms. Seeing that the methods of extreme 'un-European' barbarity by means of which it established itself have never been repudiated, and seeing that the Comintern maintains in every country an organization — often (as in Spain) of a very redoubtable order — openly advocating the guillotine and the firing-squad for everybody inside it who is above the status of a mechanic — and meaning it, what is more (or don't they think they do?) why are all our governments so remarkably accommodating? What influences everywhere have been brought

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to bear to make them so? Why do they allow this ill-favoured, ill-mannered, insolent outlaw Power to send its little squinting bank robbers-turned-ministers to the various capitals, and in so doing countenance so persistent and high-spirited an attempt to 'liquidate' the political system to which we are all supposed to belong, and whose laws at all events *we* are all required strictly to respect and to obey?

The average man, a little prone to independent reflection, has been asking himself this type of question for a long time now; and really there is no quite satisfactory answer to it. There remains a question-mark over the whole of this anomalous situation. And when Soviet Russia was asked to join Great Britain and France at Geneva as one of the Big Three, the dimensions of the question-mark greatly increased; but any possibility of a satisfactory reply receded still farther into the distance.

But a new phase in international relations is being, at this moment, intensively prepared, a phase which will be infested, from start to finish, with these uneasy question-marks. For the democratic governments of Western Europe seem about to commit themselves to courses which can only end in war: and that war would be in fact a war to make the world safe for communism in a far truer sense than the last war was one to make the world safe for democracy. The British Empire, in any case, has very plainly nothing to gain from it — it will not make the world safe for the British Empire, but very much the reverse, as has been already remarked. England itself will be no better off because of it, but far worse off. So *why* is the British Government taking the steps that it is?

§ 8

British Labour finds its principles 'irreconcilable with dictatorship', but National Government principles make an exception, when it is Moscow

I have kept this question strictly upon the plane of self-interest. But if we relate it to the much-advertised principles of English liberty, obsessing, all of a sudden, our parliamentarians, it is even more difficult to see how democratic susceptibilities can be sufficiently chloroformed in the breast of a British statesman to enable him to overlook the conditions at present obtaining in Russia. Even the British Labour Party refuses to have anything to do with the Communist International. And it will be not uninteresting to quote from a letter, sent by the secretary of the Labour Party, Mr. J. S. Middleton, to Mr. Harry Pollitt, in reply to an application for affiliation on behalf of the Communist Party executive.

'The fundamental difference', wrote Mr. Middleton, 'between the democratic policy and practice of the Labour Party and the policy of dictatorship which the Communist Party (has) been created to promote (is) irreconcilable. No events which have taken place in the intervening period (namely between the annual conference of the Labour Party at Edinburgh in 1922 — when a request for affiliation was turned down by 3,860,000 votes to 261,000 — and Jan. 29, 1936) have served to reconcile that profound political distinction. It is true that Fascism has conquered power in various European States. In the opinion of the National Executive Committee, however, the victories of the Fascist dictatorship were in part facilitated by the

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campaigns for Communist dictatorship that preceded them — campaigns which effectively split the working-class movements and rendered their overthrow possible.

‘Moreover, the National Executive Committee cannot fail to take note of the proclaimed fact that the present application for affiliation is but evidence of the deviation in the tactics which have been pursued by the Communist International in recent years, and that affiliation is sought, not for the purpose of promoting the Labour Party’s declared policy and programme, but, on the contrary, to utilize party facilities on the platform, in public conference, and in the Party Press, to displace their essential democratic and Socialist character and substitute a policy and programme based upon Communist Party principles.’

What is one to conclude from this? Only one conclusion is possible; namely, that the democratic so-called ‘national’ Government of Great Britain (which no one can accuse of ‘tory’ tendencies) does not share the view of British Labour that there is any ‘irreconcilable’ difference between its own principles and the well-known dictatorial principles of communist teaching. No, *British Labour is far more Tory than is the ‘City’*. Both dictatorship and communism have for it far less appeal.

Dictatorship may be ‘irreconcilable’ with ‘socialism’, then, but it is not irreconcilable with ‘nationalism’ of the Baldwin brand. The National Government is ready, in the field of foreign policy, to ‘affiliate’ itself with the Comintern; whereas the Labour Party in the domestic field is *not*. That is the position.

Further, the dictatorship principle, when held by the gentlemen who put in their slaughter-yards millions of Russian citizens, a few years ago, in addition to wiping

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out, in a particularly objectionable way, the entire reigning family of Russia — that principle causes no distress to democratic susceptibilities — when it is held in Moscow. But let that same principle be held — or, as the Labour Party letter I have just quoted points out — let it be merely adopted to *counter* ‘the campaign for Communist dictatorship’: above all, let it be adopted, as a stern expedient, upon the banks of the Spree — oh then, there is not a bristle upon the back of the outraged political animal labelled ‘democrat’ that does not furiously stand up on end, while the blood of the sham-bulldog boils with rage!

But *what*, for mercy’s sake, is at the bottom of these peculiar contradictions, we can only ask, in blank amazement! — Yes, we know that one man may steal a horse whereas another may not look over the hedge. We quite understand that — the dope and the claptrap apart — our ‘national’ party politicians can scarcely be expected to feel so deeply as all that — not so deeply as a typical labourite — about *dictatorship*, and would be quite prepared to ‘affiliate’ themselves with the devil, if some powerful financial group persuaded them that money could be lent to hell very advantageously. But why this sudden affectation of extreme susceptibility where ‘right-wing’ dictatorship is concerned? Why this discrimination against a German anti-communist revolt — in favour of a Russian Communist *status quo*? That question *must* be answered by our politicians, if we are to ‘trust’ them, as they put it.

§ 9

Democratic crusade against 'fascism'

It is certainly the opinion of most foreign observers that the present British Government have committed themselves to what can but be described as a *democratic Crusade*. In their quiet and a little equivocal way — pretending to be doing one thing while they are really engaged in doing something else, as usual — they have raised the standard of a Holy War against 'dictatorship'. But (and this is the highly peculiar thing) not against *all* dictatorship; only against 'fascist' dictatorship.

It is not 'fascists' who say this. People all over the continent, and in America, of many different shades of opinion, have expressed this belief. But let me quote from an article by the celebrated French publicist, 'Pertinax'. The article appeared in the *New York Herald Tribune*, November 8th, 1935.

'Public opinion in England at the present time, and the policy emanating from it, is very strongly opposed to all European dictatorships.¹ As between Great Britain and Benito Mussolini, there is an account of a personal nature to be settled. In the judgment of the political leaders of England, this account can be settled in no other way than by the overthrow of the Italian dictator.

'But in this attitude of the English political leaders may be seen a tendency to follow a continental policy henceforth aiming at *all* the fascisms, of whatever sort they may be. This fact accounts, no doubt, for the grave declaration made by Sir Samuel Hoare to the French Ambassa-

¹ *Pertinax*, like our own 'national' politicians, ignores the original, and most 'ruthless' dictatorship of all (*against which* dictatorship the other dictatorships have been set up) it will be observed.

DETACHMENT OF OUR STATESMEN

dor to the Court of St. James, on September 24th, after a meeting of the British Cabinet, to the effect that if France gave England her military support in the Mediterranean, then England would do the same for France elsewhere.'

This article was accompanied by the headlines:

DICTATORS AND WAR

England at last has awakened to their menace, says this French writer — which may mean a new war against fascism in all its forms.

Members of the British Government are apt to deny, in a very forcible fashion indeed, the suggestion that their policies are influenced by a certain antipathy to 'fascism'. So, before going any further, let us see what evidence there is for this — for these claims to a disinterested and unbiased outlook. In most countries our politicians are certainly believed to experience this antipathy to 'right-wing' extremism, and their present policies are considered to owe their birth to this deep-seated hostility. And, for my part, I think it is proved that they possess this bias, and that to a really inordinate and inexplicable degree.

§ 10

The evidence against the alleged detachment of our statesmen

The *Action Française* leader, M. Léon Daudet, addressing a meeting in Marseilles on October 22nd, 1935,

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gave two reasons to account for the action England has taken at Geneva '*Expliquant les causes qui ont dressé si vivement l'Angleterre contre l'Italie, il discerne la peur de perdre les sources du Nil, et le désir de défendre le parlementarisme dont Mussolini s'est débarrassé.*' — (1) 'Fear to lose the sources of the Nile, and (2) the desire to defend parliamentary government, of which Mussolini has got rid,' were the two causes actuating Mr. Baldwin in this dispute, Daudet declared. Both of these motives Mr. Baldwin hotly repudiates; but to hear *the second* of them mentioned particularly incenses him. 'It is spread about in some places abroad,' he told his audience, in his Bewdley speech of October 19th, 1935, 'that one of the main objects in the line of action taken up by this country is to fight and overthrow fascism in Italy. That is a lie of a dangerous kind. What government Italy has is a matter for Italy alone.'

As to the vexed question of parliamentary government-versus-dictatorship in general, we all have remarked the extremely friendly attitude of Mr. Baldwin's government towards communist Russia; and consequently it would be difficult to understand why the very much milder form of 'dictatorship' involved in fascism should disturb him. Neither in Italy nor Germany were entire families of royalties exterminated in cellars, nor hundreds of thousands of people of Mr. and Mrs. Baldwin's sort massacred. So we should experience no difficulty in believing that Mr. Baldwin really resents this 'dangerous lie' very much.

Nevertheless, this repulsive falsehood is very widely disseminated in *many* places abroad. And most unfortunately for its status as a 'lie' the spokesman of Mr. Baldwin's government at Geneva gave it a great deal of

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official colour in the autumn of last year, when the 'sanctions' agitation was at its height, by drawing a sharp distinction between the Italian people and the present fascist regime.

Such a moderate and relatively anglophile paper as the *Echo de Paris* (October 9th, 1935) had an article, even, upon this subject. I think I will quote it; for upon such an important point as this I should not like you to regard me as indulging in exaggeration. Other Paris newspapers expressed themselves even more forcibly. This deliberate insulting discrimination of Mr. Eden's between *the government* of another country, and *the people* that government represented, was remarked with indignation in many quarters in France at the time. And as Mr. Baldwin can scarcely have failed to be acquainted with this diplomatic provocation of his envoy at Geneva (prior to his denunciation of the 'lying' that was going on) he must have forgotten it. For otherwise he could not have employed so emphatic a word as 'lie' in describing the conclusions that were — after all not unnaturally — drawn from Mr. Eden's words in the press of the world.

'Public opinion in France has been profoundly disturbed,' wrote M. Henri de Kerillis, 'by the distinction introduced by Great Britain into the text voted at Geneva between "the Italian Government" and the people of Italy. It is *the former*, and not *the latter*, which is declared to have broken the Covenant. In other words Mussolini and Fascism are directly pointed to (as the lawbreakers). It is upon the head of the Italian Government and his political regime that England and the League of Nations declare a war of righteousness. — France should never have permitted this to happen.'

This at least is not 'a lie'; and all of these public

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exchanges, in which accusations of disgraceful mendacity are bandied about, come to have a rather uncomfortable look, in the light of such discrepancies as are here revealed. One cannot help feeling that, in his indignation, Mr. Baldwin should not have made use of such a word as 'lie' (*dangerous* would not have mattered — *everything* about this business is dangerous). In taking up his stand upon the vantage ground of Truth, he should have made surer of his foothold, and seen to it that it was unassailably that of *fact*; he would have been wiser not to have challenged statements that could be so easily substantiated. However, M. de Kerillis continues:

'Certainly, the opinion of Frenchmen is very much divided with regard to fascism, considered as a system of government. And for my part, I should not hesitate a moment between the political institutions of Great Britain and those of Italy, if I had to choose. I prefer a thousand times those of Great Britain. But that is hardly a reason for denying the role of fascism in Europe, as an antidote to, a barrage against, the growing power of communism.

'In placing itself at the head of the internationalist crusade against fascism, the British Government is inspired by electoral considerations,¹ with which of course everyone sympathizes, but also it is inspired by more complex motives, less visible ones, but of a singular gravity. . . .

'It is a mistake of the British Government's to believe that if it succeeded in bringing about a revolution against the fascist regime in Italy that it would be able to direct

¹ This article by M. de Kirillis was published shortly before the general election.

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that revolution according to its good pleasure, and to ends in conformity with its own political interests. Italy would never return to the parliamentary monarchy, enfeebled by permanent internal dissensions, so generously desired for her by England. What is possible at Athens, where British pressure is so effective, is not possible any longer at Rome. The downfall of fascism could only lead to communism, in Italy, which, after a short period of sanguinary struggles, would very quickly evolve into those *nationalist* moulds which obtain in Moscow, thus checkmating the political ends of Great Britain.'

I do not think that M. de Kerillis was allowing enough for the moralist emotionalism (misguided, as it appears to me) of our present rulers. If a 'Machiavelli' is at large, and pulling the wires, I do not believe that he is to be looked for inside the British Cabinet. You must look elsewhere. I am sure that there are none but honourable men (at present) within that august assembly, as I have already stoutly maintained. M. de Kerillis was basing his reading of British policy too much upon his experience of the Staviskified politicians of the Third Republic.

Even if Mr. Baldwin *did*, in his private mind, desire the elimination of the Mediterranean 'despot', who (he believes) disgracefully misrules Italy (preventing communists from forming nice harmless little 'cells' in mines and works and so flouting 'democracy') it would be for motives that could be traced to the precepts of Holy Writ far more than to the precepts of *Il Principe*. But he does not. He has no wish to coerce the Italians into 'freedom' — so let us proceed.

POWER POLITICS AT A FUNERAL

§ I

The new 'Entente' with Soviet Russia

THE British Government is about to arrange — or has already arranged, many people believe — a military alliance with France. Lord Lothian, in the House of Lords, has asked the Government to state whether a secret treaty exists between the British and French Governments. The denial elicited by this inquiry did not by any means set those doubts at rest. Meanwhile the Franco-Soviet military alliance has been ratified by the French Chamber and Senate. Hence Great Britain is about to become, or has already become, for better or for worse, the military partner of Communist Russia. And this military alliance is, of course, directed, ostentatiously even, against Germany. 'We won't have any encirclement going on!' declares Mr. Eden. And meanwhile he and his colleagues 'encircle' for all they are worth!

This, in its simplest political terms, is a military alliance of democracy and of communism against 'fascism': or of internationalism against nationalism. 'In the coming century' says Mr. Amery in his book, *The Forward View*, 'nationalism may well be superseded by the issue between different forms of political structure, between parliamentarism, fascism, and bolshevism.' Well, that issue is already with us, and grown to full

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stature overnight. Parliamentarism and bolshevism seem to feel a remarkable affinity for one another, if for no other reason than that both are consumed with an equal hatred for fascism.

But, at the time of writing this, no open treaty is known to exist between Great Britain and France, except the Treaty of Locarno, or the residue of its commitments; and as I desire to confine myself to what is definitely established, or so persistently conjectured on all hands as to have semi-official status, at least, I will describe the position, as it has been generally presented in the Press, using the method of verbatim quotation from the leading newspapers.

Let us go back to the first *open* manifestations of the new virtual Entente between Great Britain and Soviet Russia. The funeral of King George in January was made the occasion, by the British Government, for taking a long step to further that inclusive diplomatic plan which consists, apparently, in grouping the so-called ‘peaceably-minded’ or ‘peace-loving’ nations around Great Britain, France, and Russia, beneath the legal fiction of a ‘League of Nations’, which institution has become what is in fact a Holy Alliance against ‘fascism’.

But let me proceed at once to somewhat extensive quotation, lest it should, at some future time, be thought that I was indulging in prophecy, rather than — as is the case — humbly recording facts, as they transpire from day to day.

First I will quote at some length from a typical article which appeared in the *Morning Post* of January 30th, 1936. It is ‘By our Diplomatic Correspondent’, and is occupied entirely with the diplomatic exchanges with which the pomp of death was apparently accompanied.

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In death we are in the midst of life! But, alas, these busy 'diplomatic exchanges' will in the end, and at no very distant date, probably spell death for great numbers of those attracted by the funeral of the King, but not lucky enough to be in the privileged ranks of 'diplomacy'.

The presence in London of a large number of foreign statesmen has provided an opportunity during the last few days for important diplomatic soundings. . . . Among these a special interest attaches to Mr. Litvinov, . . . M. Litvinov has profited by his visits to have conversations with members of the Cabinet. He lunched with Mr. Eden yesterday, and afterwards called on Mr. Baldwin. . . . These conversations have given rise to much speculation. While their subject is naturally not disclosed, it is widely believed that they have more than a polite significance and that, in fact, Mr. Litvinov has a definite object in view.

TRADE WITH SOVIET

'It is well known, for instance, that Russia is anxious to obtain foreign credits, and it is equally well known that various British industries are keenly interested in the development of our export trade with Russia.

'Discussions on this subject have been going on for some time past. Before Christmas the idea was being mooted of a British loan to the Soviets, the proceeds of which would be used for purchasing British goods, particularly machinery. The loan was to be Government-guaranteed. . . . The scheme had the approval of the Foreign Office, and when last heard of was being considered by the Board of Trade. It would surprise no one to find it resuscitated as a result of M. Litvinov's visit.

'As a complement to the economic conversations, I have reason

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to believe there have been political talks of a certain political importance.

‘Other conversations of note which have taken place in the last few days are those which Mr. Eden had with the King of Bulgaria and Prince Starhemberg, the Austrian Vice-Chancellor, yesterday, with M. Flandin, the French Foreign Minister, on Tuesday, and Herr von Neurath, the Germany Foreign Minister, on Monday. Mr. Eden dined last night with King Carol of Rumania, among the other guests being M. Titulescu, the Rumanian Foreign Minister.

‘Although none of the tendencies at present observable are specifically directed against Berlin, there is nevertheless forming, slowly but surely, and ostensibly under the aegis of Geneva, a vast coalition of peaceably-minded states whose chief *raison d’être* is fear of Prussian aggression.

‘Two symptoms of this movement which have been particularly commented on during the last few days are the replacement of the germanophile M. Laval by the extremely anglophile M. Flandin, and the very marked rapprochement between Austria and the Little Entente, further progress in which, I gather, was made in the course of conversations held in London yesterday.’

So the representatives of this ‘vast coalition of peaceably-minded states’ had a great séance in London, in the first month of 1936, it would seem. Their subsequent adventures in Paris were an unfortunate anti-climax; the Grand-duke Otto barging in and causing the greatest consternation. The net result of the whole affair appears to have been a definite check for the Franco-British-Sovietic plot. But that will not be the last plot: and it is highly typical.

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As a pendant to the above account of these funereal intrigues I will quote intact a half-column from the *Daily Mail* of the following day (Jan. 31).

'M. LITVINOV AND MR. EDEN
French comment on London Talks
From our own Correspondent

Paris. Thursday

'Much interest has been aroused in the French Press by the conversations in London yesterday between M. Litvinov, the Soviet Foreign Commissar, and Mr. Baldwin and Mr. Anthony Eden. The following are among the comments:

'*Figaro*. — The conversations are worth while emphasizing because they apparently are a sequel to the long private conversations which Mr. Eden recently had at Geneva with the Soviet delegate. They mark the particular importance which Russia attaches to relations with Great Britain — relations which are becoming much closer in view of a common preoccupation — that is to say, the question of Germany and Japan.

'*L'Oeuvre*. — M. Litvinov attended a luncheon which Mr. Eden gave at the Foreign Office in honour of the Russian Marshal Tukachevski, at which was also present the British War Minister, Mr. Duff Cooper. This manifestation of Anglo-Russian rapprochement is an event of considerable importance.

'The *Matin*, the *Populaire*, and *Quotidien* print a Havas Agency dispatch which says:

'In Soviet circles in London extreme satisfaction is displayed concerning the conversations which M. Litvinov has had. Soviet circles also emphasize strongly the friendly character of the general conversations which

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took place at the Foreign Office luncheon. Marshal Tukachevski was received by Mr. Duff Cooper and by Lord Swinton, Minister for Air.

‘RUMANIA-SOVIET PACT PLAN M. Titulescu’s Proposal

Paris. Thursday

‘The conversations held in London since the funeral of King George among some of the leading visitors and British Ministers seem likely to be continued here.

‘King Carol, M. Titulescu, the Rumanian Foreign Minister, Prince von Starhemberg, the Austrian Vice-Chancellor, and M. Litvinov have arrived here from London, and it is expected that they will severally meet members of the new French Government.

‘It is expected that the conversations between M. Litvinov and M. Titulescu will be especially important. The Rumanian Minister is understood to have argued that the Soviet should participate in the Balkan guarantee of the independence of Austria.

‘He is also said to have suggested that a pact should be signed between Rumania and the Soviet perhaps on the lines of the Soviet pact with Czechoslovakia.

‘The question of any such new pact must, however, wait on the ratification by the French Parliament of the Franco-Soviet pact. — Reuter.’

§ 2

Russian and British air-bases on the German frontiers?

The Franco-Soviet pact has been ratified and it is highly probable that a Rumano-Soviet pact, on the lines of the military pact between the Soviet and Czechoslovakia, will be signed in the near future. The Austrian Government (which represents a fantastically small fraction of the people of Austria) seems to be moving towards an entente with the Little Entente. So the game of 'encirclement' goes on: and all these arrangements — carried on in every case over the heads and usually in contradiction to the wishes of the people — are made possible, and constantly stimulated by British and French gold. The remarks which I have quoted from the *Morning Post* mean, in plain language, that Great Britain is about to arm the Soviet against Germany. (Marshal Tukachevski stopped behind in England after the funeral of King George to go round the British armament factories to pick his tanks and guns.) There have constantly been rumours of a fifty million pounds British loan to France. That, too, in plain language, is Great Britain arming France against 'the Hun'. And a violent political controversy raged for some weeks in France because of the announcement that the French Government were proposing to give the Soviet a credit of ten million pounds (i.e. France arming her eastern ally).

In a more palpable way even than this, however, the Germans have the pleasure of observing the 'vast coalition of peaceably-minded states' preparing, upon a luxurious scale, regardless of cost, the necessary air-bases

R U S S I A N A N D B R I T I S H A I R - B A S E S

from which, in every direction, fleets of bombers can be directed against the cities of the Reich, to hail down death and destruction. Lest, however, you should think that I was drawing on my imagination — for you may not pay much attention to this ‘war-scare’ talk, as you may regard it, in the Press — let me again quote from one of Lord Rothermere’s papers (no other newspaper as far as I know thought it desirable to give it publicity). It is an account of a protest addressed to the League of Nations, by the Slovak National Council. It is from the *Daily Mail* of January 31st, 1936.

‘NEW RUSSIAN AIR BASES

Geneva, Thursday

‘Information of the highest political importance is contained in a memorandum presented yesterday to M. Avenol, Secretary-General of the League of Nations, by Dr. Victor Dvorchak, on behalf of the Slovak National Council.

‘This is an irredentist organization in Czechoslovakia which has head-quarters in Geneva. In addition to Dr. Dvorchak, the council consists of Dr. Jahlicska, a well-known Roman Catholic priest, M. Frantisek Unger, and M. Maravek.

‘The memorandum states, that in consequence of the military treaty concluded on June 6 between Czechoslovakia and the Soviet, Russian aeroplane bases are now being rapidly organized throughout Slovakia.

‘Seven underground aerodromes, equipped with the most modern appliances, are alleged to have been constructed — or are being constructed.

‘According to Dr. Dvorchak, the organization of all these bases is entirely in the hands of Russian experts

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and officers, of whom there are already several hundreds in Slovakia.

'To reach Slovakia Soviet machines would have to fly over Rumanian territory, permission for which is said to have been given by the Rumanian Government in agreement with Czechoslovakia.

' "*When this chain of air bases is complete*", a representative of the Slovak National Council said to me to-day, "*Russia's huge air force will be brought within easy bombing distance of Berlin, Warsaw, Budapest, and Vienna.*"

'The Slovak Council has considered it urgent to bring the matter to the attention of the League of Nations while there is yet time to avoid a catastrophe.

'Dr. Dvorchak considers that the Czechoslovakian Government, by providing a "corridor" between Czechoslovakia and Soviet Russia, is deliberately facilitating the extension of bolshevism to western Europe.

'In the interest of humanity, therefore, it is pointed out, the Slovak Council has appealed to the League to aid in restoring Slovakia to the Mother Country, Hungary, of which she formed part for 1,000 years.

'United with Poland, she would then provide an impassable barrier to Russian communism.¹

¹ These Slovaks, it is interesting to note, provide one of the major problems at Geneva for the powers-that-be. They are a standing scandal. For *invariably*, just as one of the wicked countries is being hectored in a most edifying harangue (to be quoted *in extenso* next morning in all the official, and semi-official, organs of *la grande Presse*) and told that its intolerable treatment of its minorities must cease at once or it will be put under merciless embargo, boycott, blockade, and finally be wiped out with thermite — just as all this is going on there will be an unseemly commotion, and the Slovak minority delegation will, to everyone's consternation, turn up in force. Swiftly it has to be headed off by scandalized ushers, and parked out of sight somewhere. — Everyone knows what it is there for. It is there, naturally, to register its bitter and monotonous protest at the treatment of the Slovak minority by the Czech's. For there are more Slovak's, Germans, etc., than there are Czechs in Czechoslovakia. And all loathe being Czechoslovakians. And of course Czechoslovakia is a great *status quo* nation that can do no wrong, belonging to the inner circle of the elect.

DEMILITARIZED RHINE ZONE

The above extracts are merely a few specimens of the 'war news' selected from the English Press, within a few days of each other.

But if Germany has the pleasure of watching her Czechoslovakian neighbours to the south-east getting ready to bomb her in comfort, she also has the satisfaction of hearing it rumoured on all sides that her British and French neighbours to the west have been studying the problem of getting at her throat in the most expeditious manner possible from *their* side of the cockpit, when zero hour strikes.

§ 3

The Demilitarized Zone of the Rhine. ('There is something wrong about Locarno')

When I come to relate the ins and outs of the violent Anglo-Italian dispute it will be, of course, my business to trace the various events which have led up to this question

None are so vociferous where it comes to lecturing an outsider-state for riding roughshod over its minorities. So the Slovak National Council is one of those things that it is not respectable to mention in League circles. Had the Irish not shot and bombed their way into political freedom, they might occupy much the same position – lying in wait for Mr. Eden as he issued from the Council Chamber – flushed with righteous indignation at the oppressive behaviour of the Danzig majority government. Or such a position may yet be occupied by Egypt, if ever admitted to membership of the League of Nations. Just imagine it – a truly Genevan situation, of extreme burlesque! After a particularly big *battue* of the Cairo police, let us suppose (after having shot up a few dozen of these dusky patriots, in a determined effort to teach them how democracy *really* works) it may quite well be that the presence of an Egyptian delegation at Geneva may cause our ministers to absent themselves, for fear of meeting them, for weeks at a time! And what a good thing that would be!

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of British air-bases in France. The present rapidly maturing military entente between France and Great Britain is the logical outcome of the Italian imbroglio: so logical, in fact, that it may well have been foreseen by the gentlemen who were responsible for the latter.

But, in a few words, this is what ultimately has happened. Great Britain, on her own initiative, sent an armada to the Mediterranean, on which M. Laval's government looked askance. At last, however, the French agreed to support British naval action against Italy in the Mediterranean, and the French and British staffs, of the various arms — air, land, and sea — went into consultation. The French, as was to be expected, pointed out that this would mean transferring troops from the German frontier to the Italian frontier. And it is generally supposed that the French did not agree to afford Great Britain this support in the dispute with Italy, without getting some *quid pro quo*. It sounds on the face of it extremely improbable that the French would. The *quid pro quo* was the promise of British assistance in a hypothetical war against Germany: and it was announced in the continental Press at the time that arrangements were on foot for establishing air-bases for the British army in the north of France, within convenient striking distance of Germany — quite close, in fact, to 'Britain's frontier', as newly drawn by Mr. Baldwin, namely the Rhine. This was subsequently denied in official quarters. But rather naturally the interested party (in Berlin) was not entirely satisfied with these official disclaimers. And everything that has happened since has tended to bear out the reasonableness of this 'hunnish' scepticism.

And now we come to Locarno, repudiated by the

DEMILITARIZED RHINE ZONE

Germans, and, in practical fashion, brought to an end by the entrance of German troops into the Rhineland. The German Foreign Office expressed the view, at the time, that the Franco-Soviet alliance, and equally these new military arrangements between Great Britain and France were inconsistent with the Locarno Treaty. And this objection was exceedingly well-founded. The French and English Governments, and their Press, however, argued that the Germans were not justified in regarding the harmless little alliances which were *en train* as hostile, or as impinging upon the spirit of the letter of the Locarno Treaty.

Supposing that military understandings — all, but too plainly, directed against Germany — continue to develop. Supposing that, without denouncing Locarno, the British and French Governments enter into arrangements that all too obviously point to the uselessness of Locarno as a safeguard for the Reich. *Then*, who can deny it, to ask Germany to leave the demilitarized zone of the Rhine undefended, would be extremely unjust (if it is possible, that is, to be 'unjust' to a German, or to a 'fascist'). But what else have the British and French Governments done but that?

Whenever the German Press, however, objected that the Locarno Treaty was being violated by what the governments of Great Britain and France were doing, the French Press — '*la grande presse*' — led by Madame Tabouis, and followed by the British Press, screamed and thundered that the Germans were going to reoccupy the demilitarized zone — although the Germans had said nothing of the kind. (But that of course made no difference.)

When the British and French publics had been startled

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for a week or more by menacing headlines, an *accalmie* supervened. It was all right, these bewildered publics learned. The Germans had said they were *not* going to occupy the demilitarized zone! All was well! It was a panic-rumour, merely. How started — by whom concocted? Oh, never mind!

Now, what the independent Englishman was faced with during the *pre-Rhineland* period was the fact that his Government was probably busily engaged — behind his back, as it were — in making all sorts of military arrangements which *would* justify the Germans in regarding Locarno as a dead letter. But what he further had to face was the fact that if the Germans one fine day got tired of eternally holding a candle to the devil, and of pretending politely not to see all the goings-on to east, west, south and north of them, and if they took some action that implied that they regarded the Locarno Treaty as an instrument upon which they could no longer rely: oh *then* they would be denounced in the French Press (headed by Madame Tabouis) and in the British Press twelve hours afterwards, as a lot of warlike and inveterately aggressive 'Huns', whose goings-on really *must* be put a stop to.

How far could the British, French, and Russian Governments go, in their deliberate provocation of Germany — in their undisguised 'encirclement' — before Germany finally abandoned all attempts to propitiate them, and *took* all the necessary steps (and the fortifying of the Rhine was one) to defend the Reich against this 'vast coalition of peaceably-minded states' — of which Great Britain, under the inspiration of Mr. Baldwin, and his protégé Mr. Eden, had become the leader? That was the only question.

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Could these 'peaceably-minded states' between them virtually tear up the Treaty of Locarno under Germany's nose, and would Germany *still* stand, hat in hand, mildly protesting?

I should myself at the time have been inclined to answer that Germany had no choice in the matter, and would just have to grin and bear it. For her best chance was that the peoples of these various 'encircling' countries would at the last moment find some means of restraining or discouraging their politicians, provided Germany gave the latter *absolutely* nothing they could seize on as a proof of 'hunnishness'.

I should have been wrong. In the event the Germans took the bolder course, and made an end of all that humbug. But it is quite likely that they decided to reoccupy the Rhine, ultimately, as a result of all the talk about their doing so. I do not believe that that was their intention in the first place. Several things lend colour to this belief, as it happens.

§ 4

The Germans half-invited to take back the Rhine

That the British Government would have liked all along to have done with Locarno goes without saying. But nothing so frank as a denunciation of it could be expected of them. 'There is something wrong about Locarno,' said the *Manchester Guardian*, in a leading article a few weeks before the German reoccupation of the demilitarized zone. And in that it was giving voice to the unspoken thoughts of all those politicians in England who have embraced Mr. Litvinov's formula of 'indivisibility'.

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Or even the *spoken* thoughts, if rumour is to be believed. For it was said at the time of the late King's funeral that Mr. Eden had volunteered in conversation with von Neurath, that England would not object to some measure of remilitarization of the Rhineland.

Even — at the same time that they were propagating 'news' to the effect that Germany was preparing to re-occupy the demilitarized zone — some newspapers were slyly urging the Germans to do so.

'The menace of German rearmament and of National Socialist Imperialism should not deter us,' asserted the *Manchester Guardian*, in a blood-curdling access of 'fairness', 'from examining the German case dispassionately' (for there was a 'feeling present in the mind of every objective observer that Germany has a case'). 'Or, of course,' suggested the *Manchester Guardian*, 'Germany might put it to the Allies in this way: "It is unfair that a huge belt of German territory and bridge-heads of a river that is Germany's main internal line of defence shall remain demilitarized — that is to say, defenceless — while the corresponding belt of French territory is an impregnably fortified area. We accept 'Locarno' in so far as it applies to both countries, but reject it in so far as it does not. Either there must be a corresponding demilitarized zone on the French side of the frontier or we must have the right to fortify the demilitarized zone on our side.'"

This was, of course, merely suggesting a course of action to the poor old 'Hun' which, should he nibble at the bait, and embrace such an argument, would be seized upon at once as one more proof of his *criminal* disregard of treaties. But the Germans, since they do not dream of attacking France (why should they? it would

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only mean a general war, in which they would be courting defeat, and out of which they could get nothing, in any event) — the Germans would *far* have preferred Locarno to any other arrangement. What they must find it very difficult to tolerate, however, would be that the other Powers should virtually tear up Locarno, and that they — the Germans — should be asked to accept all the disadvantages of Locarno, without any of the advantages.

They would, I think, have tolerated even that, for their policy is peace-at-any-price with Great Britain, if they had not been subtly urged to draw their own conclusions from the indefensible treaty-breaking — *Nur legal!* ah yes, but none the less real because *the letter* was observed — of the other signatories of the Locarno Treaty and then (why not?) to take the law into their own hands. These enticements seem to have tipped the scales.

Meanwhile, the English papers were beginning to find reasons, or rather excuses, for the establishment of British air-bases in France, and the *Manchester Guardian* was of opinion that this, in fact, would be a truly Locarno-esque proceeding! For would it not, in the event of Germany attacking France — almost a foregone conclusion, from the standpoint of that newspaper — enable Great Britain to fulfil the anti-German side of the treaty with the maximum of effectiveness? But let us listen for a moment to the *Manchester Guardian*.

‘It would seem that there is in Germany a fear lest British air-bases should be established in France, and that the bilateral conversations turned round this subject as well as round the Mediterranean. Even if this had been so neither the conversations nor the air bases themselves (had any been contemplated) could, according to the view taken here (in London) be regarded as in any way

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incompatible with "Locarno". Such bases would be a measure of defence against precisely that German attack which is provided for by "Locarno".

'The German counter-argument is that "Locarno" provided equally for a French attack on Germany, and that if British air-bases are established in France they should be established in Germany as well. But according to the view taken here that argument is unsound in practice. This country is prepared to fulfil its obligations under "Locarno" in either event; but whereas the main British attack on Germany (in defence of France) would develop from France and Belgium, the main British attack on France (in defence of Germany) would be delivered by forces striking across the Channel; so that the British air-bases serving this particular purpose would be on British soil. British air-bases on German soil would, in fact, be an absurdity.'

That will terminate my evidence from the Press immediately prior to the re-occupation of the Rhineland by Germany. Short of the fall of the Baldwin Government, or the retirement of Mr. Baldwin, or the overthrow of Mr. Eden, this policy of encirclement will take its course. And there are far worse politicians than Mr. Baldwin, should he decide to retire. The march of events will be perfectly steadfast and regular (except of course for hold-ups, when public opinion in England, such as it is, imposes momentary caution upon our rulers). At any time that you pick up this book, during the next six months or more, none of the evidence assembled in it will be inconsistent with what will be happening at the moment in question. Matters will merely have been taken a few steps further forward, that is all. What Mr. Lloyd George has called 'the circle of death' will merely

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have been drawn a little closer about the 'Hun' that is being hunted.

So no vaticination is involved in these statements: the fatal progression at which we are assisting cannot be arrested, apparently — as any one is able to foresee who has followed the course of European diplomacy during the last two or three years. And this course can only lead, within a shorter or longer period, to a situation in which a general war, all over the world, will take place — Great War No. 2, in short.

THE PRESS OF A MODERN DEMOCRACY—AS SEEN BY LORD BRYCE

§ I

'It is the newspaper press that has made democracy possible in large countries.' — Lord Bryce

THERE is a book called *Modern Democracy*. It is by the late Lord Bryce. It may be described as the bible of all those up-and-coming politicians of Asia, whose business it is to teach 'democracy' to the coolie masses. For Lord Bryce's book tells you all about democracy; and that, of course, more than anything else, is what the Asiatic politico has to find out about, as expeditiously as possible.

But it is not only the Asiatic politico who has to find out in a hurry about democracy. Our western politicians at the present juncture are compelled, as much as any Babu, Copt, or Chink, to mug up democracy, too.

And — significantly enough — Mr. Eden's first speech as Foreign Secretary was delivered upon a text from Lord Bryce. It would not perhaps be too wide of the mark to surmise that our Mr. Eden had been dipping into *Modern Democracy* in order to find out what the damned thing was all about. He has to travel in that line of goods, after all. At a pinch he should be able to display a nodding acquaintance at least with its jolly old principles! And there is little doubt that since democracy has been suddenly galvanized into life, and given

PRESS MAKE DEMOCRACY POSSIBLE

the status of a religion — so as to provide the 'fascist' Roland with a suitable Oliver — this rather dreary subject will now furnish the subject-matter of book after book; like that, if anything, drearier subject, marxist materialism, which for more than a decade has cluttered up the bookstalls of the world.

However this may be, Lord Bryce makes the subject positively amusing, if anyone could. His is an absolutely invaluable book for any man who experiences twinges of scepticism when the beastly subject comes up, and feels an invincible repugnance to the mere name of the wretched thing, and who wants to provide himself with a little handy ammunition to discharge at his too freedom-loving (and 'peaceably-minded') friends! He will find all he wants there! It can be guaranteed to bring down any 'sanctionist' at the first discharge! No 'fascist' should be without it! — *Modern Democracy* (2 vols), by James Bryce (Viscount).

Modern Democracy is the most pulverizing exposure of democracy and all its works that it is possible to imagine. And it is written by a sturdy old democrat (*more or less* — for it seems to me that he is suspect: no man could write such a book and be quite ignorant of what he was doing). The most lavish documentation you could possibly desire, upon most extant brands of parliamentary democracy, is there made available. It can be bought for twenty shillings, and should be bought at once. Get it before it is banned by the Baldwin Government!

This is not the last time in the course of the present study that I shall have occasion to draw upon its wealth of good sense and carefully sifted information. But I have just been indulging in an orgy of quotation from the Press. And 'it is the newspaper press that has made

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democracy possible in large countries', as Lord Bryce remarks.

The Press, indeed, is democracy, as we know it to-day, one might almost assert. And, of course, when democracy ceases to be the accepted political system in a modern state, it is the constitution of the newspaper press, more than anything else, that suffers a change.

That this change is more apparent than real — if you understand by this change a change from 'freedom' to 'control', and from unfettered utterance to arbitrary direction from above — is fairly obvious, however, if you look into the matter at all carefully. For in a 'democratic' country the control is there just the same, is it not? The independence of the Press (independence of an overpowering minority dictation) is largely a myth. The only difference between the control of the Press in 'totalitarian' Germany and in 'free' England, at the present moment, is that in the former the domination is an open and avowed one, and everyone knows where to look for the authors of this 'controlled' opinion: whereas in the latter the control is occult and irresponsible.

Or as Lord Bryce says: 'Newspapers have become one of the most available instruments by which the Money Power can make itself felt in politics.' Or again: 'The causes which enable newspapers, well-managed and commanding large capital, to drive weaker papers out of the field, have in all countries reduced the number of influential journals, and left power in comparatively few hands.'

And as for the field of foreign policy, the aspect of Press-power with which we are concerned here: 'Press power is wielded more effectively through the manipulation and suppression of news than by the avowed

CONTROL OF THE PRESS

advocacy of any political views. It is more dangerous in the sphere of foreign than in that of domestic policy, and is one of the chief hindrances to international good will.' And of course, where 'the Money Power' is anxious to destroy that good will, and to drive two or more nations into a dog-fight, the Press is its chosen instrument.

§ 2

The control of the Press in (1) Democracies: and (2) Totalitarian States

If you suppose that 'the manipulation and suppression of news' is confined to Italy and Germany, you are, of course, betraying a degree of obtuse credulity and childish trustfulness, not to mention an absence of the most elementary gift of observation, that really fits you for that 'indivisible' millennium that is in course of preparation on all hands!

Indeed, where the control is *open*, the danger is far less, and the reader is far more apt to be critical. Palpably, the information he receives, and the opinions which are offered him, he receives at the hands of a recognized authority. He naturally will exercise his judgment, if he has any. He knows where he is.

Whereas, in a democracy, 'Scarcely any of those who read what the paper tells them know who has written what they read, or what sources of information he possesses, or what intellectual weight. The voice seems to issue from a sort of superman, and has a hypnotic power of compelling assent.'

There you have the essence of the matter. The power of a visible 'superman' — the modern 'dictator' — is as nothing to the power of this *invisible* superman.

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And such is the magic of this verbal hypnosis, what is more, that the reader ultimately comes to believe that he is himself responsible for all these opinions he finds domiciled in his consciousness. — This is what we term *public opinion*. And we are — in a democracy — very proud of this indeed. 'Public opinion' is a thing to which we attach a superstitious value.

But, if these opinions insensibly incline to *war*, for instance, we sigh, and we reflect that we are after all still rather cave-men at bottom, *proper devils* in fact, when we're roused! And, as we buckle on our Sam Browne we feel rather sinister fellows. — And if at the end of 'the spot of trouble' we have no top to our heads, or a metal ear or a glass eye, or possess a couple of artificial limbs, we shake our heads and sadly admit that it is after all *our* fault. We *would* go to the wars, we would — we were just spoiling for a fight!

So the hypnotized automaton of democracy, *through not knowing that he is not free*, is, if anything, in greater danger than the plain servant of the state (*servant* — not 'gentleman-help' and co-partner, or any democratic make-believe of that sort). And he is in a less dignified position for he is a perpetual dupe, enslaved by *words*. 'We rule people by words!' When he said that, Disraeli was describing a typical democracy.

§ 3

Does the Public possess 'the data necessary for forming a fair judgment'?

But Lord Bryce is particularly good about the manner in which a nation can be blinkered and led into the

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slaughter-house of a not very commendable war. He is particularly good (as Mr. Eden said) about *war*. He shows how a democracy can be misinformed (or still worse half-informed) by those who govern it, regarding the true nature of a dispute with some foreign nation: with the result that a great and historic community, so subtly misled, may be induced to enter upon a course which is either unwise, or dishonourable, and which *might* even be insane, or monstrous — without the smallest suspicion of what they are doing.

But let me put before you at once the words, once more, of that inimitable democrat, Lord Bryce. And I make no apology for it being such a lengthy extract — I start where he is describing the peculiarly deceitful devices to which these herd-hypnotists resort: for every word is true, and every word is applicable to our own case. The Spanish-American War of the Nineties, or the Boer War, were flea-bites, certainly, to our sort of wars. But if the results are beyond comparison more terrible with us, the methods of their preparation are the same.

‘A safer and more telling device,’ writes Lord Bryce, ‘than either argument or misrepresentation is found in *the selection of facts*. In every controversy there are plenty of facts fit to be adduced on both sides. If a paper skilfully and systematically selects for publication all the facts that point to one conclusion, and suppresses or mentions curtly and scantily all the facts that bear the other way, it cannot be charged with direct falsehood, though it practically falsifies the case by withholding from its readers the means of forming a just judgment. The suppression of the truth is more insidious than the suggestion of the false. This Negative misrepresentation is as easy and more prudent than Positive, because

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detection and conviction are more difficult. Partisan speakers as well as journals slip into it more or less unconsciously, but it is far more effective, and usually more deliberate, in the hands of the journal, and has been employed on a great scale, especially in matters of foreign policy. Before the outbreak of the war between the United States and Spain in 1898, the newspapers of the former country were deluged with matter putting the conduct of Spain in Cuba — conduct doubtless open to grave censure — in the worst light and letting little or nothing appear on her behalf. A more remarkable case was seen a year later, when the bulk of the British Press stated and exaggerated what case there was against the Transvaal Government, while ignoring the facts which made in favour of that republic, with the result that the British public never had the data necessary for forming a fair judgment.'

You will, I think, agree that the above is an excellent account of how a democracy, reposing a pathetic confidence in its 'free' institutions, may be humbugged into an action which, had it 'the necessary data', it would refuse to embark upon. And it is not unnatural that we should ask whether, in the far more tragic circumstances in which we at present find ourselves, we are being supplied, by our Press, and our politicians, with 'the data necessary for forming a fair judgment'.

To 'state and argue the case' for a foreign country 'is usually unpopular', and will be stigmatized as unpatriotic as Lord Bryce very truly remarks. I am prepared to incur that risk; for I cannot imagine a case in which a despairing fatalism, counselling one to hold one's peace, could be said so nearly to approximate to a criminal

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inactivity — however vain that activity may in fact prove to be.

Postscript to this section

Before closing this section I will qualify the above statements of the late Lord Bryce regarding the Press in general, by a few remarks of a more concrete order, with special reference to the British Press.

That the British public is not being supplied at this moment 'with the data necessary for forming a fair judgment', regarding the major problems of foreign policy, is, I think, undeniable. But it is not altogether the fault of the Press: it is much more the fault of the Government, which imposes its bias upon it, and of the News Agencies (such as Reuter, the 'British United Press', etc.) whose messages all the papers, except where they regard it as desirable to employ a special correspondent, make use of. And even, such a newspaper as the *Manchester Guardian* supplies really very full and accurate accounts of what is going on. If you make full allowance for its traditional 'left wingism', and if you, in consequence, make a habit of reversing everything reported in its pages, of deploring what it exults over, and vice versa, and remembering that what it announces as *likely* to happen, is probably only what it, and the powers that be, *desire* to see happen, then that greatest of the provincial newspapers will be found of great value (so *conscientiously* is it *wrong*) and far better than most London papers.

Then *The Times* has shown even very great powers of resistance to the orthodox opinion of the moment. It has proved that, when it is persuaded that the foreign policy of the Government is at fault, it is prepared to go against

it. Thus, in the earlier stages of the campaign against Germany, this most influential of all English newspapers (of legendary power, indeed — ‘the Thunderer’, the official voice of England for the outside world) threw its weight in the scales against the anti-German Baldwin policy; and at a most critical moment, gave a magnificent performance of ‘independent’ newspaper might. To that performance the ‘democrat’ doctrinaire can point with some justifiable pride. For England may have been saved, by the action of its premier newspaper, from plunging headlong into an unjust and exceedingly risky war.

And yet Lord Bryce’s destructive analysis of the dangers inherent in an irresponsible instrument of ‘public opinion’, passing into the control, every day, of a smaller number of people, and more and more arbitrarily disciplined, cannot be dismissed as the uneasy broodings of an over-conscientious democrat. Because ‘democracy’ is, here and there, still a reality; and because ‘the freedom of the Press’ is still, even to-day, more than a mere parrot-cry to delude the ignorant voter; nevertheless the tendency on all hands is to close the ranks, and to achieve a uniform surface of mechanical unanimity, which, ultimately, is in no way different from the unanimity of the ‘controlled’ Press of a communist or fascist state.

Already the policy of our weekly or periodical journals is as uniform as the most fanatical totalitarian could wish. From the left-wing conservatism (of the Baldwin pattern) represented by the *Spectator*, to the ‘friends of Russia’ radicalism of the *New Statesman*, there is nothing but a dead level of liberal-pink orthodoxy — milder and a little more camouflaged, or more frankly salvationist, as the case may be.

But let us peaceably-minded (not ‘peaceably-minded’!)

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people review the scene, bearing in mind what Lord Bryce has said, and see how we stand in the matter of Press 'freedom'.

The British Press, first of all, is *not*, as at present constituted, unanimous. It is not for instance *all of it* engaged in preparing the British public for Great War No. 2. So 'the freedom of the Press', even to-day, has *some* meaning. Just as I am allowed to write this book, animadverting, in a directly critical fashion, upon what is the policy equally of the Government of the day and of His Majesty's Opposition, in the same way certain great newspapers — because of this great, but misused, principle of 'free speech' — are free to direct daily attacks against the Eden-Baldwin policies of 'continental entanglement', in availing themselves of that traditional freedom. These are mainly popular newspapers, it is true, whose views on matters of high policy do not, unfortunately, carry the same weight as one or two of the Government papers — though they actually print far more accurate and intelligent political news at the present time, embedded, certainly, in a dense mass of football, dogs, horses, and gang-crime.

Now, it is significant that these refreshing exceptions to the rule depend ultimately upon two individuals — namely Lords Rothermere and Beaverbrook, who occupy in England much the same position as Mr. Hearst in the United States. And of course everyone knows that it is to Mr. Hearst that you must go if you want any intelligent inside information about what is going forward in America — information that has not been doctored by one or other of the big Power-Trusts.

But Lords Rothermere and Beaverbrook (and Mr. Hearst in America), with their 'rugged individualism',

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are scarcely typical of the present time: that sort of individualism was common enough yesterday, but it will be non-existent, probably, to-morrow. Very luckily for us, they do still bestow some reality upon the slogan, 'freedom of the Press', to which such noisy lip-service is paid. But eliminate these two independent 'sports', and you would get something like a dead level of uniformity. Meanwhile, we, in England, unquestionably owe these two much abused 'Press Barons' a debt of gratitude, for their consistent efforts to keep this country out of war. For once the Press, or the free section of it, has been more pacific — and infinitely more statesmanlike — than the politicians.

But these honourable exceptions should not blind us to the fact that such 'freedom' is precarious, even as Lord Bryce pointed out — depending as it does upon the views of a single man, and a man of a type that is not being produced anywhere at the present time. There will be no more Henry Fords, Hearsts or Harmsworths. The tendency is all in the opposite direction to this sort of competitive 'lone hand' independence. More and more a uniformity is being created in the field of journalism which must result in something almost indistinguishable from the controlled opinion of a One Man State. Only one control, in the great western democracies, when it is quite complete, will be operated in the deceptive name of traditional 'freedom' — it will affect to be multiple; nay, to be million-headed. Let us thank our stars that that time has not quite arrived. For I need hardly say that it is not freedom I am objecting to, but the slavery to which an unintelligent system of 'free institutions' inevitably leads. The 'freedom of the Press' is an admirable principle — when it is a reality, and not an insidious sham.

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CHAPTER V

THE TRUTH REGARDING THE
'GERMAN MENACE'

§ I

Must every country, except Germany, have an army, police force, and fire brigade?

IN the official and semi-official Press of the great western democracies; there is one fact which is said to dominate all others: namely *the rearmament of Germany*. This would not matter quite so much, it is asserted, if political power in Germany to-day were vested in a democratic government, instead of in a 'dictatorship'. It is because the government of Germany is 'authoritarian' that the fact of an armed Germany is of such overwhelming importance. — No nation can be allowed to have arms, it would appear, unless it is a democracy — or, of course, a soviet.

But let us have this viewpoint stated in the very words of a typical mouthpiece of 'public opinion'. Let us have it from the horse's mouth: and let us take as our horse, Mr. Isidore Ostrer (*not* an auspicious name, exactly, for cordial relations with Germany! — but nevertheless very typical of majority-opinion in Great Britain; both a newspaper-proprietor and publicist; and, as it happens, the man who has given the directest expression known to me of the case for the use of armed force to coerce the German people and compel them to accept the form of

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TRUTH OF THE 'GERMAN MENACE'

government that imperialist Britain and communist Russia consider suitable for them).

'Is it not apparent,' writes Mr. Isidore Ostrer (*Referee*, February 9th, 1936), 'that the lack of colonies is not the fundamental cause of German and Italian aggressiveness? Is not the cause more simple to define? *If Germany and Italy were democratically governed, would there be any danger of war? The answer is No. The solution, therefore, is democratic government.* By this I mean that a democratic community . . . (has) to be *forced* into war — and always on moral grounds.'¹

Having studied the above words, from the horse's mouth, with attention, you will observe that the reason adduced for the 'danger' and 'menace' of a 'fascist' regime — and for the almost demented hostility displayed towards it in the Anglosaxon countries — is because, under such a regime, it is *easier* to make war, than it is for a democratic government to make war.

But let us come to a stop before this contention: for I am quite certain that it will not bear examination. Indeed, the analysis of the working of the Press from the pen of the late Lord Bryce will rather have knocked the bottom out of this pretty theory, for any fair-minded reader.

If it were announced to-morrow on the wireless that

¹ This is the argument (that is the necessarily *moral* complexion of all wars waged by democracies), let us note in passing, with which Mr. Eden was credited *before* the British Government went to Geneva and so unexpectedly established itself there as the high-priest of the Covenant: the argument, namely, that British public opinion could never be persuaded to take any really drastic action *except by way of the League of Nations*: except — in other words — upon the path of moral uplift. Deluged with moralist slogans, and upon a highly ethical issue, only thus could they be induced *again* to get into khaki. And it was this argument of Mr. Eden's that won the day, it seems. Hence all that has happened since.

EVERY COUNTRY ARMS SAVE ONE

an act of war had been committed by Italy against Great Britain, and that Great Britain was putting herself in a posture of legitimate defence, not a murmur would be raised — no questions would be asked, or, indeed, *could* be asked. Great Britain would be *at war*, and there would be an end of the matter.

But let us turn to the question of *the rearmament of Germany*. Let us inquire how far and in what manner that is a *casus belli*. For, obviously, it is not a good reason to go to war with a country, because that country is *armed* — else we should be at war with several countries, who have greater armaments actually than Germany is ever likely to acquire. Nor is it a reason to go to war with a country because that country is *increasing* its armaments. Otherwise we should have been at war long ago with France, Russia, Italy, and the United States.

From the start, the post-war 'peace' of Europe has been built upon the belief that an enormous nation in the centre of the continent would continue to allow itself to be economically bled to death, and to remain totally *without arms* in an armed world: this defencelessness clearly imposed on it to enable the other nations to go on dictating to it in *complete* and beatific security. (This is all that 'security' means, about which we hear so much. Or if not, what *does* it mean?)

Meanwhile, the dominant military and economic Power on the continent of Europe, France, would hold in economic vassalage the small states of the Danubian Basin and of the Balkans; with Poland — very grateful at being free, and making no money demands to speak of upon the sorely-tried purses of the Paris banks — hitched on as a military ally.

Europe was envisaged as a network of colonies of the

TRUTH OF THE 'GERMAN MENACE'

Banque de France and the Comité des Forges. And at Geneva was the official capital of this quite novel description of colonial empire, called the League of Nations.

Great Britain remained benevolently upon the periphery of this system. Great Britain had an empire of its own, upon which the sun never set. So it did not envy France its big white 'residency' at Belgrade, or all the other adjuncts of its imperial power over the Poor White Trash of Mitropa.

Mussolinian Italy was a bit of a complication. But at long last a French prime minister, M. Laval, succeeded in coming to terms with the Italian dictator. And England (though secretly not best pleased at the sort of bargain that had evidently been struck) still smiled with mild approval.

§ 2

The Great Depression

But all this rather unreal creation of the 'allied statesmen, at Versailles (and their *experts*! — mainly of their multitude of experts) was subjected to a great shock, from which it has never recovered. In 1932 the 'Great Depression' — the 'Economic Blizzard' — hit it. And — the child really of the Economic Blizzard — Adolf Hitler hit it too! This House that Jack Built rocked about in an alarming fashion. The unarmed Prisoner in the Iron Mask in the basement 'awoke'. ('*Deutschland — Erwache!*' the Prisoner was heard to roar behind his bars.)

THE GREAT DEPRESSION

What *caused* the Economic Blizzard — or rather *who* caused it — I cannot tell you. That it was not a meteorological phenomenon — just an affair of the elements, of stratosphere or of sunspot, in the same category as '*la pluie et le beau temps*' — of that we may be certain. It had its origin in human — perhaps sub-human — brains all right. It was somebody, or some class of people, who caused it. And it was intended to do something. It was purposive. But Man proposes and God disposes — and it did several things it certainly was not intended to do.

This Great Depression — the 'Economic Blizzard' — has been compared with the Russian Revolution. That is not, I think, so wide of the mark. It was a complementary event, perhaps. It may have been *intended* to complete the work the Russian Revolution (that 'spontaneous' uprising of the Russian masses — another 'blizzard', in fact) began. But something has gone wrong. Even, the cocksureness of the economist may yet be his undoing. He never makes allowance enough for the romantic side of human nature.

However, leaving aside the cause, it was this 'blizzard' which decided the German people to react, and to call the bluff of that novel empire of the French. Since it was essentially an empire founded upon Money-power and held down by Bank Credits — an empire of usury (so they argued): well, just as this 'Economic Blizzard' had sent flying the partial and very artificial economic recovery of the Weimar Republic, so, if it lasted, it must result in the unsticking, too, of this pasteboard structure of French power.

Realizing this, and having no great taste for yet further hardships — or feeling that if they were to be asked to endure hardships, it might as well be hardships entered

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upon in their own interests and not somebody else's — the German people defied the *status quo* and put Hitler into power. They had been ruined once — in 1923, when the whole middle class was practically wiped out by the crash of the *Valuta*. If they were to be ruined all over again, they might as well be ruined in their own way, they argued, and have some say in the matter!

§ 3

The hostility of the Western Powers to the National Socialist regime

When Hitler became *Reichskanzler* in 1933 Germany was to all intents and purposes totally unarmed. But France, and France's more favoured colonies, were armed to the teeth. This German defiance of the will of the French Empire roused a storm, as was to be expected. And everything that has happened since, and which is happening to-day, is the prolongation, the perpetuation, of that storm.

That, in face of this storm, the Germans could not continue to remain unarmed is obvious. It is equally obvious that this movement to rearm was a desperate gesture of self-defence, in the face of daily threats, backed up by an invincible armed might, and all the wealth of the banks of the European world.

Anyone, at some future time, wishing to arrive at an unemotional, statesmanlike, judgment upon these matters,

HOSTILITY TO NATIONAL SOCIALISM

will have only to refer to the contemporary files of the Newspaper Press of the two hemispheres. The sheer volume of rage and menace was sufficiently impressive. He will not have to look any further for the haste displayed by Germany to acquire a few weapons more effective than bows and arrows. If a man — or group of men — wrote you threatening letters of great violence for a year or so, you would probably sooner or later go and buy a gun!

The National Socialist regime encountered a hostility beside which the hostility shown to Soviet Russia, in the first years of the communist revolution, was a mere flea-bite.

This rather peculiar circumstance may be accounted for, first of all, by the habits of thought engendered by the Great War. The Germans had been in the role of arch-enemy and 'Hun' for so long: and after the War they were prevented from mingling with the other peoples of the world upon equal terms. They were still a ticket-of-leave nation, after all. What the Germans call the 'war-guilt lie' was still gospel truth for the nations who had been ranged against them. (I mean of course to the fools who do the fighting, not the gentry who do the talking — and lying, since no democracy will fight without its daily ration of lies.)

Then National Socialism was a very original, though genuine, brand of socialism, and its immediate destruction of social-democracy the moment it won power aroused very great hostility among socialists, trade-unionists, and liberals in other countries. And last, but by no means least, National Socialism, by its proscription of the Jew, raised against itself the violent hostility of Jewry in every country on earth. The 'Jewish Boycott'

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was insignificant in its effects in comparison with the other boycotts, outside the ranks of Israel, which that boycott stimulated. Boycotts are catching. Boycotts became fashionable. 'Sanctions' is merely *boycott*, after all; and we have had a lot of practice in the art of boycott lately at the expense of Italy. And then, of course, the *Parteigenossen* of Thälman succeeded in raising a formidable stink.

It is therefore no wonder — apart from questions of 'national honour', or of the quite natural desire to have an army, a police, and a fire brigade, if other nations have them — that the Germans should provide themselves with the sort of weapons that the other nations possessed.

When Hitler came upon the scene, it may be objected, the other nations of Europe were engaged in *disarmament* discussions. It is quite true that they were, and had been for some time. Great Britain was getting a little restive at the perpetual piling up of warplanes, submarines, and so forth, that was going forward in France and other countries. (For, the 'German menace' out of the way, as it was at that time, since Germany had fewer arms than Portugal — well, there are *other* 'menaces'.) But Germany was in no way responsible for the breakdown of the 'disarmament' discussions: and the following passage from Mr. Amery's *Forward View* will carry, I think, the necessary statesmanlike weight to confirm this assertion of mine.

'Germany's action (in walking out in 1933) broke up the Disarmament Conference. But there is no justification for the idea that Germany wrecked the hopes of a Disarmament Convention which, but for her, was on the eve of a successful conclusion. Even if the two-stage plan

WE RESPONSIBLE FOR FEAR

had been accepted, even if the length of the stages and the details of the scheme of inspection had been agreed upon, that would still have left all the other issues unsettled, and with the prospect of settlement as remote as it was when the Conference adjourned in July. All that happened, in fact, was that Germany rudely put an end to the general game of pretending to square the circle.'

That was of course only *one* of the 'games of pretending' to which Germany has recently 'put an end' — and *rudely*, sometimes; for how else can they be put a stop to, some of them, after all? But the 'disarmament' game was never intended to lead anywhere — indeed, it seemed rather to stimulate armament than otherwise. All Germany did was to cut short the humbug.

§ 4

'It is we who are responsible for creating an atmosphere of fear.'
— Lloyd George.

But now let me turn to the general position of the Allied nations over against Germany, since the War; and rather than supply you with a summary myself, let me use the speech in the House of Commons on February 5th, 1936, delivered by Mr. Lloyd George in support of Mr. Lansbury's motion. It excellently epitomizes the situation as it exists at present, showing it in relation to the salient facts of the background of vast armaments, against which the present-day rearmament of Germany must be considered, if it is to be properly understood.

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'Between 1925 and 1932,' said Mr. Lloyd George, 'the armaments of the world increased by 50 per cent. (Hitler came into power in 1933, Germany began to arm again in 1934.) The increase was not an increase by Germany. It was an increase in France, in Italy, and in the United States, and it was an increase among those who negotiated the Treaty of Versailles, which pledged all its signatories to reduce armaments to the lowest minimum compatible with security.'

'In 1932 came the great economic crisis, and the race of armaments was arrested. Since then there has been a certain measure of economic recovery all over the world, and there has not been an acceleration but a precipitation in armaments. It is a very serious position. Are we at the end of it? On the contrary, we are face to face with a programme of rearmament in this country.'

'Quite clearly if the world is rearming, we cannot be defenceless. France is arming, Italy, the United States, and Japan are arming. We have got to arm.'

'There are two great countries in Europe — Germany and Russia — who are apprehensive of encirclement. They have real fear, these two immense military Powers, with their skill and their immense resources, great man power, and infinite courage.'

'Germany, on the one hand, has Russia, with her army of 6,000,000 trained men, her powerful air force and equipment — infinitely better than in the Great War — with transport, artillery, and tanks, and everything that makes an army of that kind irresistible. And there is France on the other side . . . — *A courageous animal that is frightened is a most terrible thing.*

'The final protocol of the Locarno Conference declared the intention to hasten disarmament, but the figures of

WE RESPONSIBLE FOR FEAR

armaments have nearly quadrupled since. Then came the Stresa Conference, which was summoned to call attention to a definite repudiation of a treaty by Germany. The representatives of three Great Powers passed a resolution declaring that the scrupulous respect of treaty obligations was a fundamental principle of international law and an essential condition of the maintenance of peace. The chairman of the conference, Signor Mussolini, drafted that resolution.

‘No respectable firm of solicitors would write complaining of the breaking of a clause in an agreement unless their clients meant action. It was inconceivable to Germany that three Great Powers (Britain, France and Italy) should have passed a resolution of the kind which was passed at Stresa and do no more about it. . . . As far as Germany was concerned it meant, “You have broken a treaty and these three Great Powers are going to deal with the matter.”’

‘Germany was entitled to believe that those three Great Powers meant to take action. They probably meant business, but every month there was delay, until at last it became impossible to do anything. *We are responsible for creating the atmosphere of fear.* Is it not possible to break this circle of death before it is too late?’

There is an explicit statement enough by one of the half-dozen most eminent politicians in England and one who knows a good deal about the Treaty of Versailles. ‘It is *we* who are responsible for creating the atmosphere of fear,’ says Mr. Lloyd George. It is *we*, not Germany, who bear the responsibility for that country, threatened on all sides, turning to the manufacture of guns and planes. And then, once Germany has started to do that

TRUTH OF THE 'GERMAN MENACE'

— as any other nation would have done under the circumstances — what do we do? We proceed to rebuke and threaten her again for doing so, and hasten to build up a 'vast coalition of peaceably-minded states' against her — to 'encircle' the wicked Hun with a ring of saintly peace-lovers, armed to the teeth.

The Allies pledged themselves to disarm. It was *in order that* they should be able to spare themselves the expense of armaments that Germany was asked to disarm and to remain unarmed. The Allies did not observe that undertaking — or rather the continental powers did not. Great Britain really did make an effort to do so. France proceeded to do the opposite.

When Hitler took over from Hindenburg in 1933 France possessed a combined armament, on land, sea, and in the air, greater than any country in the world. As a consequence of this enormous preponderance of military power France had assumed the leadership of Europe — a leadership that was exercised in no very gentle fashion, and which was brought to bear with a humiliating brutality upon the vanquished 'enemy' across the Rhine. In this no particular blame, perhaps, attaches to France. Supreme military power seldom clothes itself in conciliatory manners. But the Germans were made to feel their helpless position, their physical inferiority, in a way that made it very easy for such a patriot as Hitler to win their regard and support.

THE EMPIRES AGAINST GERMANY

§ 5

Three great Empires now allied against Germany

The position in 1936 is that Germany, an almost bankrupt country, her access to the raw materials of the world most efficiently blocked, and suffering beneath an almost universal boycott, is attempting to acquire the necessary arms to defend herself if attacked.

The three major Powers by whom she may expect to be attacked are France, Russia, and Great Britain, all three immensely powerful empires, with, in addition, a host of satellites. France has voted during the last twelve months sums that run into astronomical figures upon armaments. Germany can never hope to catch up in this armament race even with France alone (which country, further, possesses a navy almost equal of that of Great Britain). However many 'secret' submarines the Germans may build, or the spare parts of which may be assembled by them (as the *Morning Post* has assured its readers the Germans are doing) they will still at the most be able to do no more than make it very dangerous, in Great War No. 2, for the 'allies' to barge about in the Baltic.

And then there is Russia. The rulers of that State issue periodic statements regarding the huge scale of their armaments: undoubtedly they possess, in the matter of warplanes, tanks, and guns, an armament that Germany can scarcely hope ever to rival. M. Herriot, in recommending the Franco-Soviet pact to the Chamber of Deputies, spoke of the great standing army of 1,300,000 men, and the immense trained reserves, which would bring that army up to a figure of 13,000,000. M. Cot, another radical-socialist enthusiast for the Franco-Soviet

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pact, said in the Chamber of Deputies: 'The Russian air force is already the most powerful in the world, and is making rapid progress.' And for years we have been shown photographs of battalions of Soviet women, trained to arms, and of the intensive military preparation even amongst schoolboys. When people are pointing to the martial spirit encouraged in Germany these facts are invariably lost sight of.

And now, on top of all these vast preparations, Great Britain is about to weigh in with an immense expenditure — *not* to protect the British (which would be a perfectly reasonable proceeding, and it may well be asked why Messrs. Baldwin and Co. had not thought of this before) but, we learn on all sides, because of 'the German menace'! And the British Government lose no opportunity of displaying their bias, and in throwing their weight on the side of the pactification tirelessly pursued by the French. At the time of the ratification of the Franco-Soviet pact by the French Chamber (immediately after the overthrow of Laval — overthrown because of his delay in consummating that alliance) the German Press reproached the British Government, pointing to it as in fact responsible for this decision on the part of the French. 'The most severe reproaches (in the *D.A.Z.*) are reserved for England, whose concern for the security of her Empire is held to be responsible for the policy which is encircling Germany. "When France was hesitating whether to accept the Franco-Soviet pact it was England who urged acceleration of the remaining stages." ' (*Times*, February 29th, 1936.)

And if we want to know how the Russian oligarchy regards British rearmament we can learn it from *Izvestia* (*The Times* of Moscow):

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‘British and French defence measures are not being improved to fight Soviet Russia, but a common enemy — the European dictatorships, among whom Germany is known to be the greatest danger. Even Britons realize this fact.’

(I quote this from the *News Review*, February 27th, 1936. — Is it not curious that the *Izvestia* does not apparently count Soviet Russia among ‘the European dictatorships’, whose destruction it is the purpose of these British armaments to compass.)

§ 6

‘Everyone is assuming there is but one enemy we have to think of — Germany’

Again let us turn to Mr. Lloyd George, however, who has recently specialised in debunking the warmonger. I quote from *The Times*’ version of the debate in the House of Commons on March 10th, 1936, just after the German reoccupation of the demilitarized zone of the Rhine. Mr. Lloyd George came just after Mr. Churchill, who had been surpassing himself in alarmist diatribes against the fearful menace of German armed might.

‘There was one thing,’ said Mr. Lloyd George, ‘which struck me in this debate. Everybody was assuming that there was but one enemy we had to think of. If Germany was the only enemy that we had to think about this White Paper was quite useless. The programme had no reference at all to Germany. He did not agree with Mr. Churchill’s estimate of the power of Germany. She was the great, gigantic, most formidable enemy the

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British Empire had fought. But we had fought them. We must not run away and work ourselves into a panic. (Cheers.) In 1914 Germany had as an ally Austria, with an army of 2,000,000, or 3,000,000, very brave men, led by an able general. It was not equal to the German army, but was still a formidable army. It was half the number of the Italian army, but it held them up for three or four years. Germany had as an ally also Turkey, who inflicted two severe defeats on us and held hundreds of thousands of our men for four years. Germany was now completely isolated. Austria on the whole was against her. He was not talking of the little country known as Austria, but of a more formidable country, Czechoslovakia, a highly intelligent people, with a very well-trained army. They had about a million men in all, with reserves.

THE STRENGTH OF RUSSIA

'The other difference was that Russia in 1914 had an army which was disorganized, not very well led, fairly trained, utterly unequipped, no means of equipping it behind the lines. They had a few works, very badly run. Their transport was a mess. They had about a million cavalry. That was their idea of war. They had hardly any guns. The position now was that they had a peace army of 1,300,000 men. Hitler said that there were 17,000,000 trained men in reserve. With conscription that would be about the figure, and they had been working for years. Their transport was immensely improved; they had a great industrial system behind the line; and they had the finest air force in the world. At any rate, it was a very powerful air force. (Cheers.)

'Germany, small; Germany, with no allies; Germany,

ONE ENEMY — GERMANY

with France, Russia, part of Austria, against her — the air force that could be brought in would overwhelm anything which Germany could produce. (Cheers.) The Government could not proceed on the assumption that we were going to stand alone. (Cheers.)

COLLECTIVE SECURITY

‘The Prime Minister’s speech was full of collective security — every other sentence. The Foreign Secretary was full of collective security. He believed that while he was away the Government had a fall over it, and they were clinging to the banisters of the Covenant lest they should have another stumble. (Laughter.)

‘Collective security did not mean that we stood alone. It meant that you had all these forces together. Germany was not as mad as to do that, would not commit that folly; and that was why when they offered a 25-year guarantee of non-aggression he believed them, not because he accepted the words of a statesman who might be there to-day and elsewhere to-morrow — (Laughter) — but because in the very nature of things it would be an impossible enterprise for Germany with all these forces against her. (Cheers.)

‘Whatever use the White Paper had last week the conditions were completely changed. He was not going to question who was to blame. All he knew was that he did not think that France was in a position to point a finger of scorn at Germany on the ground of treaty breaking. (Loud cheers.) Germany had been reckless, Germany had been rash, Germany had broken a treaty; but in a court of equity she would call evidence which any judge would say provided some mitigation of her fault. (Cheers.)

TRUTH OF THE 'GERMAN MENACE'

FRANCE AND LOCARNO

Refusal to Disarm

'For 12 years or more France refused to carry out her undertaking to disarm, and even after Locarno, which was intended partly to provide a basis for disarmament, France increased year by year. But they had to deal with facts. What was going to happen? Would the House bear with him for a few minutes? (Cheers.)

'There were two or three things which might happen. He put one, which he dismissed, for it had happened before. France might say, "This is our last chance. Germany is only half ready. In two years it will be too late." France sincerely believed that. He did not know what view their military chiefs took. He did not know whether Marshal Pétain was head of the French Army at the moment, but he was a man of great authority and prudence.

'But let them not forget that the War in 1914 was made by that consideration. Germany said: "Russia is preparing; she is making up all the deficiencies in her army after the great disaster of the Japanese war. She is building strategic railways, constructing guns and factories." And the German Army said: "Unless you strike now it will be too late."

'He thought that France would realize that that was disastrous counsel then. (Hear, Hear.) It ended in the ruin of Germany, but it ended also in the ruin of Russia; and Germany was beaten because of the intervention of a country that was not ready. That was why he dismissed that, because he could not imagine that the French peasant would agree to anything of that kind.

'The next was that France would decline to negotiate except under conditions which Germany could not

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accept. There was a door of opportunity thrown open; rashly, recklessly, dangerously, by a bomb, a door was opened. France said: "I will not go through it; I should be condoning a crime." "

ANOTHER PLAN NEEDED

'He did not know whether members had read M. Flandin's statement to-night, as reported in the Press. According to this M. Flandin advanced the French demands as follows: That the Locarno Powers send a strong demand to Germany to withdraw the troops from the Rhineland; that the Locarno Powers refuse to negotiate in any way with Germany so long as German troops were in the Rhineland; and that if Germany refused to withdraw her troops the Locarno Powers would ask for sanctions, the first of which would be to withdraw ambassadors from Berlin.

'It would be out of order to raise any discussion on that, but if France insisted, in his judgment, it made the White Paper completely irrelevant. It would be for the Government to consider very carefully what their policy would be in those circumstances. But it was something which would have to be prompt and not something to be done in three or four years' time. Whatever happened, this made the White Paper perfectly irrelevant — not germane in the least to the conditions with which we were confronted. If we got negotiations which would end in 25 years of peace in Europe our defence problem would be a different one. (Mr. A. Bevan, Ebbw Vale, Lab.: What about Russia?) So far as he could see Hitler said that he was prepared to sign a non-aggression pact so far as the East was concerned. (Mr. S. Cocks, Broctowe, Lab.: Not with Russia.) At any rate,

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neither he nor any other member could answer for Herr Hitler, but he agreed that this was important.

'Assuming that we were to have 25 years of peace in Europe, the problem of defence would be a different problem. He did not say that the East had been completely overlooked. Taking all these circumstances into account he did not understand a good deal of the White Paper. After listening to the debate he thought he understood it a little better. Whatever happened in the course of the next few days the Government would have to reconsider their problem. They would need a totally different plan and inspiration than existed at the moment.' (Cheers.)

What 'struck' Mr. Lloyd George most in this debate on armaments was that Germany was singled out by everybody. It was as if Germany 'was the only enemy we had to think about'.

But many people (no more observant than Mr. Lloyd George and less experienced) had been 'struck' by this same obsession for many months past. And how odd it is that *no one*, occupying a great public position, should have pointed out this self-evident piece of humbug until Mr. Lloyd George elected to do so — at a moment when, in fact, it *might* have been too late!

§ 7

France's 'unprecedented guarantees' for her security

But having made use, to substantiate my present argument, of the words of one of the most eminent of contemporary British statesmen, why should I not supplement that statement by another from the lips of the arch

FRANCE'S 'SECURITY GUARANTEES'

bogeyman himself, the German Chancellor? It is, after all, the truth that matters: and to my mind in Herr Hitler's statement of March 12th, 1936, the truth is of so self-evident an order that it is immaterial from whose mouth it issues. You cannot get away from facts, as the popular saying has it. And here are facts right enough! — But let me quote from the statement of the *Reichsführer* as it appeared in the *Evening Standard*:

'The declaration begins by saying that before the conclusion of the Locarno Treaty, France made the following military alliances which became effective if Germany attacked France: (1) Belgium, (2) Czechoslovakia, (3) Poland.

'Since these alliances, according to the French and other Governments, had a purely defensive character and Germany had no aggressive intentions, the alliances were not considered as contrary to the Treaty of Locarno and were accepted by Germany without challenge.

'Since the conclusion of peace France had concentrated enormous numbers of troops on the frontier. Moreover, France had constructed along the frontier the mightiest system of fortifications known to history.

'Military experts of all countries agreed that an attack on these fortifications had no chance of success. Since, however, Germany had no aggressive intentions, Germany did not and does not raise any objections to these fortifications.

'France, however, had now concluded a further military alliance, with the Soviet Union. The operation of this alliance no longer depended on a decision by the League of Nations but on a decision made by the two Powers regarding their own affairs.

TRUTH OF THE 'GERMAN MENACE'

'This new alliance obtained a peculiar character in view of the generally accepted fact that the philosophic system at present in force in Soviet Russia was not only theoretically but also practically aimed at world revolution.

'The statement continues: "Before the conclusion of this alliance France already possessed as protection of her integrity (a) Herself: that is to say, the mother country itself, and colonies, with more than 100,000,000 people; (b) Great Britain; (c) Belgium; (d) Poland, and (e) Czechoslovakia.

' "In the Locarno Treaty Italy joined these Powers.

' "In addition to this unprecedented guarantee of integrity, France believed it necessary also to ensure the support of the giant Soviet empire, with more than 175,000,000 inhabitants.

' "This calls for the following comments: That Germany never committed any act permitting the slightest suspicion of Germany's aggressive intention with regard to France; that Germany never objected to the measures taken by France to protect her integrity, inasmuch as Germany had no aggressive intention; and that Germany never challenged France's defensive measures.

WAR STRENGTH OF 30,000,000

' "Therefore, the following actual situation arises: France has, for the protection of her independence, which she claims to be menaced:

' "(1) Erected the largest system of fortifications which have ever existed along the German frontier.

' "(2) Secured as legal guarantors of her integrity, Great Britain, with its entire forces on land and sea, Italy, Belgium, Poland, Czechoslovakia and Russia, with over 17,000,000 soldiers, as well as France itself.

FRANCE'S 'SECURITY GUARANTEES'

‘ “These States, between them, have a peace strength of more than three million men and a war strength of approximately thirty million. In face of these enormous and historically unique guarantees, France claims, in addition, that it needs in front of the largest fortifications in the world an area in Germany which, being demilitarized, is open to attack.” ’

For me that simple statement of fact flattens out once and for all the insensate parrot-cry of ‘Security’, which has deafened us for so long now. This is not in the least because I am prone to take sides, for Germany, or against France, but because I think that it is self-evidently *the truth*. And it is, furthermore, so *plainly* the truth, that no one who has given his attention to these matters (as our statesmen have been doing, presumably) could possibly fail to see it. Only a dishonest, or a partisan mind, could deny it or ignore it.

Obviously, and once and for all, there is no ‘German menace’, as far as England is concerned, or ever has been, since Germany’s defeat in 1918, or ever can be, in any time that need be considered. The entire business of the ‘German menace’ is demonstrably absurd. A bankrupt Germany, hastily arming up from zero mark, could easily be dealt with, if the occasion arose, by the Soviet and France, and their continental satellites, without the intervention of Great Britain. If not crushed, it could be restrained. To point to Germany as the Bogeyman of Europe at this moment is merely to play upon the fears of the British public — fears inherited from a time when Germany *was* a rich and immensely powerful military nation, with redoubtable allies. And whatever figures, in alarmist guesswork, Mr. Winston Churchill may indulge in, regarding the military budget of the

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German State — and however many billions of war-planes Germany may be *said* to possess, in order to make our blood run cold — this does not alter the case.

Let us, however, take a yet further testimony, that of Lord Londonderry, as to the mythical nature of this 'German Menace'. Recently he went over to Germany 'to see for himself', as they say. What he saw and heard convinced him of the falsity of this alarmist cry. But let me quote from an interview, for no one can suppose that these views of an ex-Baldwin Air Minister are partisan, or 'fascist'.

'On all sides,' Lord Londonderry said, 'I found there was a very friendly feeling towards this country, and a very strong desire for the friendship of Britain and France. I feel certain that Germany's development of her air force is due to her desire to have a force of a size in keeping with her prestige as a great nation, and also she is convinced that it is necessary for her security. I am equally certain that this development is not in any sense directed against Britain. It is Germany's idea of the best means of maintaining her security.'

If there is a war in Europe, the Germans will be quite busy enough defending themselves against the immensely superior air forces of their continental 'circle' of enemies, without having any bombs to spare for the British Isles. But even if this were not so, *why* should the Germans wish to bomb Great Britain? What has Germany to gain by doing that? As they have said themselves, not once but a thousand times, there is no issue between the Germans and English to-day to prevent any but the most cordial relations existing between the two countries. It is only folly, or malice, to think otherwise.

AFTER HITLER — WHAT?

§ I

'We shall all live happily ever after — once Germany is for ever destroyed!'

THE situation on the European continent bears no resemblance whatever in 1936 to that which existed at the outbreak of war in 1914. Yet we go back; yet we attempt to reproduce (as if mesmerized by the past and looking at the present through the old rheumy eyes of aged statesmen)—by the agency of our continental ententes or alliances, by the medium of menacing clamours in our Press — that situation.

Once more the Government and Press of Great Britain have indicated Germany as Public Bogeyman No. 1. I will deal with this question, and with the true significance of the Italian diversion, in due course. All I propose to do in this place is to ask a few preliminary questions.

Before the Italian comedy had started and while the German melodrama was still playing to packed houses, with Simon, Eden and Hitler the principal names on the bill (in April 1935), I made a statement upon which I cannot improve, and which requires very little alteration. In it I put the momentous question: *What after Hitler?*

If you destroy (at enormous cost in life and treasure) 'fascism' in Europe, what then? Shall we all live happily ever after? And along with that question it must be

AFTER HITLER — WHAT?

your duty to ask: 'If you are prepared to take such terrible risks to destroy "fascism", why have you worried so little about Russian communism?' For if the Germans are aiming at a totalitarian, a State Church, the communists want no Church — 'no God'. If in the course of their revolution the Nazis were responsible for the death of a few hundred people, the Russian communists killed as many millions. Where the Nazis have, we are told, used castor oil as a corrective for political dissent, the Russian communists have gouged people's eyes out. Where the Nazis allow a German citizen to move where he will, the Russian communists lock up all Russians within the Soviet frontiers. (You see no Russian tourists on the streets of London or Paris.) Where the Nazis have instituted concentration camps (open to inspection) the Russian communists have 'timber camps' and other penal institutions which far outdo the Tsarist penitentiaries and prisons of the old 'Siberian exile'.

Yes. Why have you, for all these years, worried so little about Russian Communism? That should decidedly be the one cardinal question which every man of the slightest intelligence should ask himself to-day. Not *What about Hitler?* or *Shall we all get together and down Hitler?* But WHAT AFTER HITLER? It is that that requires an immediate answer. It did not matter so much before. It seemed very peculiar certainly: but to-day it is far more than a purely speculative question. We must exact an answer from those high-handed gentlemen who are blandly committing us to war.

And do not let us allow ourselves to be answered by propaganda photographs of Stalin patting tiny tots upon the head, or with British United Press or Reuter reports of the tremendously 'bourgeois' tastes of the wives of

ENGLAND NEXT PUBLIC ENEMY NO. 1?

Moscow officials. We never entertained any doubts as to the fondness of the lady-comrades of bolshevik satraps or bankers for silk stockings. And we have after all observed in our own country that parliamentary candidates are apt to be photographed patting tiny tots upon the heads, preparatory to demanding the suffrage of the natives of the constituency they covet.

Those photographs, and 'chance' odds and ends of Russian 'news' must not deceive us (nor, even, should a leading article in *The Times*). They are about as reliable as that scare-factory disarmingly named 'Madame Tabouis'. — For that our rulers possess a guilty conscience on this score, and are fully aware of the appositeness of that inescapable question, and have not neglected to prepare for it, is proved by the extraordinary number of these little odds and ends of 'Russian' news which have lately found their way into the Press: all tending to show how absurdly genial, 'democratic', 'kindly' — in a word, *un-bolshie* (and, in short, *British*) the gentlemen of the Comintern are. And anyhow, whatever the communists might do with dagos — as in the Asturias — or Chinks — in Yunnan — they'd be real pals for any real White Man, of whom he might be jolly well proud!

§ 2

Would England be the next Public Enemy No. 1?

In 1914 Great Britain and Germany were bitter commercial rivals in all the markets of the world; everywhere German manufacturers were undercutting British, and the Germans had been building a gigantic battlefleet — the Dreadnought Race between Germany and Britain had for years caused the Mistress of the Seas

to spend sleepless nights. So, entirely apart from 'poor brave little Belgium', there was nothing very odd, as these things go, about England at that time going to war with Germany. But *to-day* for England to do so would be very odd indeed. Upon that let us, again and again, insist.

If we leave out of count the theological bad blood that a number of Anglican bishops rather unreasonably display, and (from their standpoint) the perfectly understandable bad blood that all Jewish Britons must harbour against the Germans — if we except these two classes of British citizens, the Englishman at large has no earthly motive to 'don' khaki again in an Anglo-German war.

Of course, there are always people who will find reasons for a war. And even such an 'isolationist' as Lord Beaverbrook — whom no one can accuse of being a war-monger — volunteered, some time ago, a reason why we should not at all events *desire* the Germans to be victorious in a European war: for, if successful in war, he said, they would 'become a bullying, intolerable people, swaggering up and down in Europe in arrogance and pride'.

But without challenging that picture, and without asking, like Mr. Lloyd George, what the French have been doing in that line for the last dozen years — let me call your attention to the alternative of a successful Germany — namely a *defeated* Germany. What would Europe look like upon the *lendemain* of a victory over Germany by the violent and irresponsible plutocracy of France, and the somewhat brutal masters of Moscow? Imagine Germany abolished for ever. Where the Hitlerite Totalitarian State is at present, there would be,

JAPAN — OR RUSSIA — AS 'MENACE'

instead, a handful of puppet dukes, or 'left'-wing democracies, established in its various provinces — in Saxony, Wurtemberg, Bavaria and Prussia. Or, it might equally well be, a communist dictatorship would function in Berlin.

But England's role would then be at an end. There would be no more courting of Great Britain, as the arbiter of the destinies of Europe. Mr. Anthony Eden's tailor would shrink into unimportance on the world-stage. The English nation is in a far stronger position now than it ever could or will be again, upon that we may depend, after such a *dénouement* as the military annihilation of Germany. Indeed, England would probably become the *next* Public Enemy No. 1 — for the Franco-Soviet hegemony. Who else would there be to combine against, except England or America?

§ 3

Japan — or Russia — as the 'Menace'?

If you are a pure internationalist and wholehearted 'left'-winger (emotionally susceptible to the uplift called 'the great Russian experiment') then the prospect of your frontier *still* being the Rhine (as Mr. Baldwin has told you it is) but finding yourself face to face, on the other side of it, with an absolutist power stretching from the Rhine to the furthest extremity of Asia, will be most agreeable. Otherwise not. For the most the 'swaggering Prussian' could do would be to defeat you in war, in his old-fashioned *berserk* fashion. Whereas the Russian communist would be far more thorough, and incorporate you, lock, stock, and barrel, into a salvationist imperium; of which you would be a small, distant, damp, and

rather tiresome colony. That would be *his* worst. And beside it Hitler's worst pales in comparison.

Sir Norman Angell, in discussing these contingencies, asserted that 'if to-day the German menace is greater than it was in 1914 . . . it is only because it is part of the means . . . by which Japanese power becomes a grave menace . . . The German and the Japanese problems make one . . . Defeat of Russia would make Japan . . . completely dominant in Asia.'

So India is threatened, and British interest in the whole of Asia, if Japan defeats Russia in war. *But what if Russia defeats Japan in war?* How is it that *that* does not enter into Sir Norman's calculations?

Russia is busy in Sinkiang -- in China, Mongolia, Afghanistan, and Tibet. Communist armies have for long overrun the interior provinces of China: the doctrines of Russian communism have obtained a firm hold in India. More than ever Russia is the power which any British government, one would have said, must regard as the potential enemy. Russia is the power indicated as the next master of India in succession to England. For no one believes that Babu politicians are going to be allowed to control that industrial coolie goldmine, Hindustan. And this is a power to whom we are proposing to throw open the gates of the West, and enable it to establish itself upon 'our frontier', namely, the Rhine.

In view of all this, it is a strange procedure to try and make the average Englishman's flesh creep, I submit, with the menace of Japan in Asia. And it will take a long time before the Japanese are on the Rhine.

No, I do not see how, as a *casus belli* against Germany, that Japanese argument can be logically advanced.

‘PROBLEMS’ — GERMANY DISPOSED OF

But further, at a moment when our Government is preparing for an eventual withdrawal from India, this Japanese argument is doubly ineffective. The majority of Englishmen are indifferent to-day to the ‘Empire destiny’ that would make a threat to British rule in India a momentous consideration. But the majority of Englishmen would *not* be indifferent to the prospect of becoming a relatively unimportant colony of the overlords of Moscow — if they *believed* that there were such a ‘menace’, and if they fully understood what it would entail.

It is only because the ‘communist danger’ is so efficiently pooh-poohed on all hands that Englishmen regard these matters with such equanimity: and because again it is so much in their blood to feel aloof and safe.

§ 4

The other ‘problems’ — Germany once disposed of

What course, is it reasonable to suppose, a European war — say, in a year’s time — would take? England would not be required to supply much of an expeditionary force; only a fleet of war-planes with incendiary bombs for the destruction of German cities. The French and Russian Governments, on the other hand, are feverishly arming. If ‘the Allies’ were successful, and Germany for ever abolished, England would find itself comparatively unarmed, facing an all-powerful continental coalition. With this coalition it would have nothing further in common, once the German bogey was out of the way. And that Italy will never forget the part Great Britain has played in the ‘sanctions racket’

should be plain to everybody. The Mediterranean will never be a really safe place again for an English ship.

But an idyllic reign of peace would not immediately ensue, as those with an obsession about Germany are apt to assume would be the case. On the contrary, for Germany is only one problem; and, in the form in which it is generally presented to us (that of an arch bogeyman) a highly artificial one. The *other* problems — Germany once disposed of — would then all come to the fore, and they would be problems of an order far more real, and far more 'menacing' from the standpoint of England.

§ 5

*The 'Russian Steam-roller' reaches our frontier, the Rhine.
And then?*

In a most interesting series of articles a Swiss paper, *La Gazette de Lausanne*, discussed a year or so ago this aspect of the case: namely, the military participation of Soviet Russia in the affairs of Western Europe. It inquired how it came about that the militant capitalism of France had come to contemplate an alliance with Communist Russia as a tolerable expedient, even; and it concluded that the French were, in fact, a little crazy to have been brought to that pass.

That the military value of the communist armies is ridiculously overrated it quite rightly insisted. But supposing, it went on to say, for argument's sake, that the Russian steam-roller did all that was expected of it: supposing it bore down upon a half-armed Germany, and rolled it out flat, reaching the Rhine in serried and

‘RUSSIAN STEAM-ROLLER’ ON RHINE

triumphant ranks! What then? There it presumably would stop. It would hail its allies across the waters of the Rhine; a great barbaric war-dance would occur upon the banks of that historic stream (‘Great Britain’s frontier’ that is): and the powerful Red, or reddish, elements among the French would greet with one great comradely shout of welcome the Red camp-fires of the Red proletarian host. And then, *what next?* This irresistible horde would doubtless walk back again to its native steppes. But the event would scarcely have left the democratic governments of the West in a more secure and satisfactory situation.

That the Russian steam-roller would not advance in this irresistible fashion is, however, fairly certain. Indeed, a Soviet army in the field must of necessity be a very uncertain quantity. The masters of what is practically a slave-state must think twice before they send very large armies into possibly long-drawn out campaigns abroad. Pitiless state-coercion must have bred far too much hatred of the present regime in Russia — hatred with no outlet beneath a Terror — for it to be particularly safe to have great masses of soldiers far from the seats of despotic power.

It is said that the Soviet regime possesses inadequate means of re-equipment: that its railway system is lamentably poor: that it is defective in horse transport (hence its recent mobilization of the Cossacks). But all that is nothing compared with the question-mark against the individual peasant-soldier, and against the purely military qualities of their leaders, too.

But there is yet another question. In the case of these highly-mechanized forces it is legitimate to ask whether the natural mechanical incompetence of the Russian

is not going to play its part, to the confusion of his fanatical masters. For however many may fall before the firing-squad for incompetence — or, as it would be called, 'sabotage' — that would not cure the Russian of his inefficiency as a mechanic.

It is easy to picture a Chekov-like scene of dozens of airmen clambering feverishly, with an ecstasy of childish zeal, into a fleet of communist airplanes, and starting off in the most promising way to bomb to bits the citizens of Berlin. But it is also easy to imagine many of them becoming lost on the way, and eventually descending with a childlike surprise on the Riviera, or raining bombs upon the heads of their allies in Paris or Constantinople.

One can scarcely see the Russians, with the best will in the world, 'bringing things off' in a great mechanical Armageddon. Mr. Peter Fleming has some interesting things to say on this head, in his book *One's Company*.

'There is another curious thing about Soviet Russia,' he writes, 'and that is how bad she is at window-dressing . . . One has always imagined that the Russians, though never much good at putting things through, always had a talent for carrying things off. A talent for carrying things off implies a capacity for making a good impression on the superficial observer, and that capacity underlies the great and increasingly important art of salesmanship. Now the rulers of Russia to-day — the men of real power — have almost all got Jewish blood in them, and who make good salesmen if it is not the Jews? It is, I repeat, a curious thing that the Russians should be so bad at window-dressing.'

'...The Kremlin, castellated and cupolaed with dentifricial abandon, has the splendid, compelling

‘RUSSIAN STEAM-ROLLER’ ON RHINE

assurance of a strong place which is also a beautiful one. From the river bank opposite one admires its crouching outlines unreservedly. But why, oh why, does the clock which crowns a central tower announce the time as 12.15 when it is really half-past five? Why do they never carry things off?’

The Jews, like the Arabs (cf. Doughty) do not shine as mechanics. It is the colder and more matter-of-fact peoples who excel in such matters. And then, too, the Jews are the reverse of a military race (militant, but not military). So in speculating as regards the outcome of another great European war, it would be unwise, probably, for the Western Powers to place too much dependence upon the purely military effectiveness of Soviet Russia.

If, however, the western ‘democratic’ allies, and their communist partner in the east, were at last unsuccessful, that would not be very pleasant either. So, whichever way you look at it, the promises held forth of great practical advantages, by this controversial alliance, in the event of a great air and land war, might be proved extremely illusory.

But to return to the whys and wherefores of this communo-democratic confederacy: the fact that the violent and irresponsible plutocratic society of France operates through a corrupt left-wing orthodoxy (the Senate even is packed with a huge left-wing majority) does not entirely account for this strange recklessness.

However that may be, it is of the utmost importance that, at the present time, the English public should make an effort to master the essentials of this situation. What it must ask itself is this: *What would Europe look like a few*

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months after the political destruction of Germany? If we must have a war, let us at least think ahead: let us attempt to visualize what would happen afterwards.

§ 6

Do not let us act as if Hitler were the last phenomenon that was ever going to happen!

Do not let us act as if Hitler were the last phenomenon, pleasant or unpleasant, that was ever going to occur! The public should, for its own sake, from the vantage point of cold common sense, think less of Hitler, and all his many misdemeanours (as the matter is presented to it by those who desire the extinction of Germany as a force in the world) and *more of after-Hitler*. For a great deal is at stake.

To-day, Englishmen are relatively secure. Some even are still able to indulge in all the old luxuries of idealism, of liberalist sentiment. But this bit of work, at which we are all very dubiously looking on (but with a full measure of British apathy), *this* piece of work may change all that overnight. Far more than things were altered by the last war, for instance, this may alter them. All men and women should take the trouble to think it out for themselves. They should not allow their opinion to be swayed by superficial or merely emotional arguments.

HITLER LAST PHENOMENON?

The German Government would be extremely ready to sign an air-pact, or any other sort of pact, with England and France — provided all sorts of humiliating, crippling, and indeed ridiculous conditions did not accompany it — now as much as a year ago. Why should that not be done at once? Peace — that word that has now come to have a purely farcical significance in contemporary diplomacy — would thus be ‘secured’. Soviet Russia is the most unnecessary *red herring*.

‘Germans tell me,’ wrote Mr. Ward Price, at the time of the discussions with Germany regarding a pact, which came to nothing because Great Britain insisted upon the Germans entering into an alliance with Soviet Russia, and guaranteeing the Soviet frontiers both in the east and west: ‘Germans tell me that they cannot understand why the British Government should allow itself to be dragged by the French at the heels of Russia. It surprises them, after all the harm which Russia has deliberately been doing British interests throughout the world for the past fifteen years, that we should apparently be making a German guarantee of Russia’s frontiers the conditions of our *rapprochement* with Germany. German statesmen, indeed, are always curious to know who is responsible for what they regard as this bias in the policy of the British Foreign Office.’

All that I have just been saying implies no partiality for Germany, nor yet any animosity for the French people, need I say, for whom apart from their politicians, I have the greatest affection. It is not the *beaux yeux* of Adolf that I am thinking about. I am solely concerned with the interests of England, which I, in common with a great many other people, regard as threatened by this incomprehensible policy, which sends Mr. Anthony

Eden scampering all over Europe, and which, if persisted in, can only have one conclusion: war.

§ 7

'The Interests of England'

The 'interests of England,' I have said! And there of course the cat is out of the bag. By those words, 'the interests of England', unquestionably I have betrayed the fact that I regard England as a *separate* political entity -- distinct from France, Russia, or Germany.

The most influential politicians in England at this moment have, as has been explained in Chapter II, gradually come to regard England as not *divisible*, in this traditional manner of the so-called 'sovereign state'.

They have succumbed to the theory of 'indivisibility', propounded by the communists. They have divested themselves of patriotism in the ordinary meaning of the word. In moments of rhetorical expansiveness, and for the purposes of statecraft, they are still *patriots* -- and rather noisy patriots, too. But the policy they have embraced resolves itself into the pure dogma of internationalism. These latter-day 'democrats' have taken a step to further the Disraelian principles of international jingo democracy: the technics of world-empire, as taught by the original Jingo, have been subtly blended with the technics of the world-state, as taught by the Comintern. That they are quite 'within their rights', quite intellectually justified (if convinced, not out of self-interest, but as a consequence of what they regard as the compelling truth of argument), that goes without saying. 'Patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel!' Dr. Johnson shrewdly blustered. And at all events we have no right

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to assume that a man is a scoundrel because he refuses to his fellow-countrymen any privilege that is not equally shared by the Russian, Prussian, and the Turk.

You may of course regard it as a pity that it should be to the stirring accompaniment of patriotic airs that Englishmen are called upon to join the ranks of the new capitalo-soviet International. The *Internationale* — one might think — would be a more appropriate air for the occasion than 'Rule Britannia'. Still, do not let us be too particular, where little matters of consistency are concerned.

The point is — and it is one that I would labour — that these are honourable men, who are plotting this course for us. Of that I am persuaded. They look round them, sum up all the pros and cons: and they come to the conclusion that the days of the 'sovereign state' — as also the days of such flagwagging absurdities as the British Empire — are numbered. So they make what they consider the best arrangements they can for us, and for themselves, of course.

Naturally, they cannot take us into their confidence. That is understood. Most of us are too ignorant, politically: we should not be competent to follow what we were being told — especially where foreign nations are concerned, whose behaviour is often very complicated — apart from its being *nice*, or the reverse. We have to trust to those in authority to act in the appropriate, the British, way, in dealing with these aliens. *Trust me!* they say: and trust we must.

So it would be quite useless for our fellow-democrats — those who govern for us and in our name — to address us as follows: 'You are passing over into a new epoch — indeed you are already there! The world has become a

small place. It is absurd of you . . . if you only knew it . . . to go on thinking of yourself as "an Englishman". Indeed, to go on thinking of yourself as "a White Man" is completely out of date, as also very arrogant and unchristian. We are all brothers! After all, Christ said so. And now we are all going to *be* so, at long last! Hallelujah! In the future no distinction will be drawn between you and the coolie. This difference in standard of life between you and the African or Asiatic is all wrong. We shall all be coolies together! And though as a mere human being I might be disposed . . . I admit it! . . . to see you got the best cut off the joint, merely because you came from "the old country" and spoke the same language as myself; yet, *as a statesman*, I have to banish all those feelings, you do understand that? As a true member of the world-brotherhood at Geneva, I have to say to myself that you are of no more consequence, and no less, than an Andaman Islander. And as to the British Empire being *British* . . . well, we are not living in the days of Wolfe or Clive! There are the Germans, for instance, beginning to ask to have their colonies returned to them. *Their* colonies! How about the Blacks who inhabit the place, to whom we used in the old days to refer to as "natives"? Because the Germans seized portions of Africa before the War, that does not mean that those lands *belong* to them, any more than our colonies belong to us. Why shouldn't the Basuto colonize Westphalia for a change! Between ourselves, I wish he would!

It is along these lines, I take it, that our leading parliamentarians are thinking to-day. I am quite sure that they believe that they are 'acting for the best'. By way of their religious training — and through all that

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liberal sentiment they inherit from the early nineteenth century — they have been insensibly led into these theoretic regions. And their duplicity — and there is no doubt that they *do* ‘practise to deceive!’ — is the result of their conviction that *they know best*: and that the great mass of the citizens in a parliamentary democracy are quite unfitted to play any decisive part in matters of such tremendous moment. For the policies recently inaugurated at Geneva by His Majesty’s Government are policies the effects of which must be a considerable factor in the future history of mankind. Great Britain is not Denmark or Serbia!

We know best. Trust us! That is the watchword of these democratic tribunes; the exponents of new international democracy. The trouble of course is that they may not be right! That is what — entirely in the dark, as we are — we have to consider. And we have to act, too, if we think that they are not right — as much as this oddly unfree, democratic, system will allow us to. For the freedom *to discuss*, which still is ours, does not take with it the freedom to intervene politically in the carefully controlled working of this political machine.

§ 8

Democratic Internationalism

Democracy has entered upon a new phase, then: and the best way of describing it is, perhaps, *Democratic Internationalism*. The liberty, equality, and fraternity of *peoples* occupies in it the place formerly occupied by *individuals*. And, significantly enough, it is the government of the British Empire which inaugurates, and seeks intensively to promote, this new ‘rule of law’ for the

world at large. The significance of this has not been lost upon the more observant of our foreign critics.

At all times it has been a familiar phenomenon, the spectacle of the renegade aristocrat (of which Mirabeau was the outstanding type) who throws in his lot, *for his own ends*, with the revolutionaries. That is one reason why the Hitlerite is not overfond of the 'monocled gentleman', as he calls him. In every 'Herr Baron' he scents a potential traitor, ready to sell anyone or anything, if short of cash.

But to-day there is little question that the British Government has been cast for that role, by many disobliging foreign observers. Great Britain is the tainted, *déclassé*, Milord, who, for his selfish ends, has thrown in his lot with the Commune.

That the biggest landowner of all among the nations should be the foremost in the outcry against a *landless* nation like Italy (the 'great proletarian', as the land of Mussolini has been called) when that nation shows a tendency to possess itself of a piece of land that does not belong to it, has lent colour to this. In company with the Soviet, and its satellites of the Little Entente, Great Britain has been leading the defence of the coloured people, against 'White Aggression'.

It is quite impossible for the Government of the British Empire to escape the suspicion that it regards this as the best way out of the difficulty — out of the difficulty of India, of Egypt, of Australia, and the rest of it. In a word, *out of the difficulty of Empire, in a twentieth-century setting*.

A 'perfidious' calculation— So it has seemed to many people. Let us, at this difficult junction in world affairs — Great Britain has argued probably, as these disobliging

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foreigners have interpreted it — let us get everybody theoretically (and with appropriate safeguards for us) to *pool* everything at Geneva. But, since at this particular moment many otherwise powerful nations possess practically no colonies (or even none at all) to bring to 'the pool'; and since this great pacific pooling would be presided over not by soldiers, but by lawyers (and *our* lawyers would be in all the key positions, that is understood): then *we* should be giving away so immeasurably more than anybody else, that we should presumably expect to get *something* out of this unequal funding! We should be in a far better position than the poor old *Have-nots* anyway. Indeed, we should stand a good chance of becoming — bureaucratically, and upon the 'mandatory' model — the virtual boss of this new-fangled, *pooled*, leaguiist, colonial world-system.

A century hence Great Britain would be a great deal better off *that* way, at all events (if it could be wangled) than any other. On the old system we should in fifty years' time have, in all probability, and if we read the omens correctly, very little 'empire' left.

This is the sort of argument in which, as a matter of fact, the British *Raj*, or the Government at Whitehall, might be, with some show of reason, accused of indulging. But if that were the case, the *if it worked* clause would, of course, be of great importance.

So much for the suspicions to which the British action at Geneva has laid our government open. But I am quite sure that those sceptical foreigners who have ascribed these calculations to our rulers, have done so without making sufficient allowance for the puritan strain in the English composition, and for the effect of

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‘cocoa’ in the veins of the legislator. The Old Testament was an ideal *livre de chevet* for the empire-builder. And the New Testament is a most appropriate treatise if, under pressure of circumstances, you feel impelled to give your empire away, or agree that it shall be dissolved into an ‘indivisible’ world-commonwealth.

PART TWO

CHAPTER I

ABYSSINIA: NOT A WAR BUT A REVOLUTION

§ I

Open diplomacy versus secret diplomacy

HOWEVER seemingly confused a given situation may be, in politics, there is always a pattern to it somewhere. Picking out the pattern is only a matter of patience. It does not require much intelligence: only it is surprising how few intelligent men have any patience, to judge from their politics.

Cherchez la femme is the classical formula for crime in general. For politics, regarded as a branch of crime, the one word *oil* occupies to-day much the same favoured position as *femme*, for a foolproof formula. But this time, in the case of that sudden and very alarming occurrence, the Anglo-Italian dispute, it was *not* oil. Mr. Ricket was a red herring, merely.

The neighbouring sphinxes in the Egyptian deserts are not more mysterious than British diplomacy in Addis Ababa and Alexandria. But we have undoubtedly entered a very dark epoch in the history of international diplomacy. Abyssinia is not the only mystery.

How transparent the old 'secret diplomacy' was, compared with this 'open' variety we have to-day! There it is all boiled down to something quite simple and straightforward, like *oil*, or *gold*, or *coal*, or *pepper*. But *to-day*!

No man can hope, with his grandfather's old measuring

rod marked *oil, gold, coal*, etc. — to understand anything at all about what is going forward around him. He must be prepared to wrestle with Marxian dialectic, the Cabala, the Marcionite Heresy, the astronomical mathematics of High Finance, before he can begin to appreciate what this or that 'crisis' *really* signifies! Let him put oil and Sir Henry Deterding — nay let him put Sir Basil Zacharoff — for ever out of his mind! Let him resolutely abandon 'armament interests' (whether the Comité des Forges, Vickers, or Krupps) as an explanation. Mere money-making explains *nothing*. That was all right once upon a time, but not to-day.

Then the new role of the Press. A Press barrage in 1936 is a very different thing to what it was at the time, say, of the Balkan Wars. Political publicity changes as rapidly as the technique of aviation. And this publicity factor has transformed diplomacy. In place of its dear old traditional 'inscrutable' face, we have now a sort of frightful mask, compounded of crooked homeliness, of equivocal 'openness', and of sanctimonious exhibitionism. Oh, for the good old days of Mr. Maugham's 'impenetrable', aristocratic, wooden, ambassadors — monocled, polyglot, and aloof!

Well, *Murder Must Advertise!* So must diplomacy, it seems, or so diplomacy has come to think. And very extraordinary are some of the results.

Diplomacy, in the past, has generally been marked by 'secrecy', has it not? In essence it has been a game played behind closed doors. The Press has remained outside, as a sort of Greek chorus — babbling, shrieking, and moaning about what it apprehended might be going on within. It was a sort of official and a little ridiculous scaremonger. Its noise could be largely discounted.

MEDITERRANEAN: DANGER SPOT

But now that the Press has been admitted to the secret chamber, it still remains the official scaremonger; but of course, with very much more authority. — *Before* it was ostensibly an outsider, with no standing except that of a privileged gossip. *Now* it has become the official voice, almost, of statecraft.

But is this voice in consequence any more reliable? Is counsel not darkened, rather than the reverse, by the participation of the journalist in the most inner processes of diplomacy? Do we know any more about the Abyssinian Mystery, for instance, or the mystery of the Anglo-French relations, because the high contracting parties have used the Press so directly in their diplomatic exchanges? We have heard their very voices, bellowing away day by day, in furious debate, through the megaphones of their newspapers. Yet we are none the wiser.

§ 2

The Mediterranean — Danger Spot No. 1

I suppose that we may say at present that the crisis of the fever ostensibly caused by the introduction of the Abyssinian virus into the European body is past. Mr. Eden's activities have been transferred to the Rhine, and away from the Mediterranean. A new fever, nearer home, is in process of incubation. The American People having very sensibly refused to allow Mr. Roosevelt to inveigle them into a new European adventure, 'oil sanctions' have long ago receded into the background. So (always remembering that a relapse is possible, and that as a 'danger spot' the Mediterranean has made of Danzig, or Memel, a complete back-number — has

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indeed become Danger Spot No. 1) we may look back upon the Abyssinian affair to some extent as past history, especially since the fall of Addis Ababa, and the flight of the Negus.

And what an extraordinary chapter of history it has been! There has been nothing like it since the days of Bismarck. Posterity will star it as the most significant single event — or nexus of events — since the setting-in of the anti-Russian policy, presided over by Mr. Disraeli and the ultimate 'Peace with Honour', brought back from Berlin (Oh 'Peace' — has not that phrase a Litvinovian smack?), or since the passing of the old order in England (if you can fix a date for that) and the final triumph of 'the City' inaugurating a 'Bankers' Olympus'.

It is not of course an 'awakening'. The sending of the British Fleet to the Mediterranean had none of the characteristics of a conscious action. The naval might of England was hypnotically *sucked down* into that treacherous lake. It marks the moment at which the British People finally slumped into the apathy of sleep, what we have just passed through.

It might almost be said that, exhausted at last by the White Man's Burden, the English had subconsciously made up their minds — if one can say that — *to sleep whatever happened through this next war that was brewing!* So murmuring 'Peace', 'Collective Security', and 'We *do* trust you!' they fell asleep.

If to-morrow thermite bombs begin raining on our cities, that will merely be part of our nightmare. The nightmare began when our battleships steamed over the waters of Trafalgar, and were met — and saluted — by the 'sea-sleds' of Mussolini, come out to mock at this somnambulist Armada!

LOOKING BACK AT LAST YEAR

§ 3

Looking back at last year

What I am doing in this part of my book is to analyse the extraordinary happenings at which we have all so recently assisted. Retrospectively I will attempt to sort out the untruth from the truth — *retrospectively* as far as that is possible; for as I have said the Anglo-Italian comedy is not quite ended yet, and it *might* at any moment have a new flare-up, you cannot shut a crisis off and turn it on in the way our government seem to suppose they can.

Looking back upon it, it has been an amazing broil. For the first time the entire 'left' wing of the world — not merely the 'common front' within any particular country — the 'common front' of internationalism in all the countries, storming week after week: all the Bench of Bishops roaring together: Mr. Lansbury calling upon all the hierarchies to repair to Jerusalem and proclaim the reign of Christ on earth: fifty-four countries agreeing with one voice to buy no more lemons from the wicked fascist 'lawbreaker': the 'Stresa Front' shattered overnight. Mr. Litvinov in the role of law-abiding citizen-of-the-world, in whose mouth unsanctioned butter would not melt, performing a frantic carmagnole in the centre of the stage: Mr. Baldwin squatting down and smoking the pipe of peace with the gunman who bumped off the Tsar and all his family circle: while 'Onward Christians Soldiers' was being community-sung by all the Free Churches, and the League of Nations Union, with Viscount Cecil as choir-master: the Paris Press resounding with far more anti-British sound and fury than at the time of Fashoda!

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What an autumn we had of it! What an unparalleled disturbance it has all been! How blissfully peaceful, in comparison, is the earth at this moment, with Mr. Eden, having tasted of the fruit of Good and Evil, somewhat hiding his head and cooing that he now never meant to 'encircle' anybody — though the rumblings of other and mightier storms from the neighbourhood of the Rhine warn us that the volcano is merely having a breather.

Such is the situation — an *Only Yesterday* full of sound and fury — which I submit to a fairly detailed scrutiny in the following pages. I will ask you to endeavour to regard it as if it were more distant than it is; or with the requisite detachment to enable you to see how *exceptionally strange* all these manifestations were.

The simplification that I offer here of a complex political situation is of a bold and unusual pattern. But not too bold, I think: whereas nothing could be too *unusual* to meet the case. For the educated public to be in possession of 'a key', a simplification, of some sort, is highly desirable. So far they have been without one, except for what they have been told by the Press, from day to day, and from week to week. And the Press, whatever other functions it may perform, does not *simplify*.

The 'situation' to which I refer above is that which has arisen as a result of Great Britain's precipitate blockade and boycott policy, then, at Geneva, in the autumn of last year: and the principal question we have to ask ourselves, in this connection, is whether the Anglo-Italian episode should be considered in isolation; or whether, on the other hand, it is not advisable to associate it in our minds with other events: with events which we may be quite sure will follow after it — which are

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already beginning to take shape, automatically, as it were, as if they were growing out of it.

I arrive at the conclusion that the latter course (namely not to regard the Anglo-Italian dispute in isolation) would respond better to the facts: and also would give the best results for anyone who finds himself befogged, and who is desirous of deciphering the writing on the wall at Geneva.

If we want to know what the future has in store for us, we cannot do better than study that last year’s test-mobilization (the sirens of the Press at full blast assisting) of hate and alarm. And it will be very instructive to note the significant groupings, for and against war (or ‘sanctions’, as many have preferred to call it) that have occurred.

‘The world can learn an immense amount from this dramatic adventure,’ a continental newspaper has remarked, referring to the ‘Anglo-Italian conflict’. And to that belief I subscribe. It can learn far more than it *will* learn, in fact, unless its nose is rubbed in it.

§ 4

‘Great Adventures’ in general

The last war was invariably referred to in the Press as ‘the Great Adventure’. War is always called something else in our time — such as ‘sanctions’, ‘the Great Adventure’, a ‘frontier operation’, or what not. Here was almost another Adventure, with a capital A, for quite a lot of people. It may, in some roundabout way, even become one yet.

What has it all been about? Where would be the *Journey’s End* of this new odyssey, in all likelihood?

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And there are *other* adventures, far far 'greater' (as Mr. Churchill has indicated) than such as could be procured for us by a squalid little scrap with mere Wops.

Since this 'Great Adventure' is finally falling through, will the unwilling participants be provided, before long, with another, and even more undesirable and deadly one? Are such 'Adventures' really worth while? Is it not important that the rank and file should be — not deferred to or consulted, that would be absurd — but given a hazy idea of the true object of such disturbances? Is it really necessary to have a gaitered sky-pilot on the job? Were we being asked to 'fight fascism' just now; or to stop Mussolini from interfering with the Nile; or the Red Sea; or was it to enhance the political prestige of an ambitious politician; or were we to make the world safe for communism (or just *democracy*, as before); or to strike a blow for 'indivisible peace'; to challenge the 'anachronism' of *all* empires, or only of one; or merely to help Mr. Baldwin to be the leader of the Communist Party — or England to be the leader of the Balkan Entente; to prepare for an ultimate 'scrap' with Germany; or to get half our fleet sunk in the Mediterranean, so as to be able to build some new ships without interference from the T.U.C. — to further the interests of England, or (far more important) those of some internationalist abstraction? These are the sort of questions I have set out to canvass, with some temerity, I agree.

The world was very much upset by the sudden and totally unexpected genevan activity of Great Britain. There was a great deal of abuse of Great Britain not only in Italy, but in many other countries.

England was always supposed to be rather Laodicean where the League of Nations was concerned (the

A PASSION-PLAY

'protocol' was rejected as too entangling, and the Treaty of Locarno substituted, as the maximum commitment to which England was prepared to agree). In spite of the fact that a famous statesman has described the Covenant of the League as the greatest event since the composition of the New Testament, the Foreign Office had not been supposed to share that view. What made it change its mind with such uncouth precipitation? Reports from Secret Service agents that the fascist emperor had his eye on Egypt, or had enrolled a 'legion of death' to wipe out the British Fleet, say the wiseacres. I wonder!

§ 5

A passion-play

At the commencement of October, 1935, the Italian army invaded Abyssinia. And ensuing upon that act of war, the world has been mobilized by England against Italy. Whatever may subsequently come to pass, or be with luck avoided, one thing is quite certain: namely, that a portentous fissure which has been evident in human society for a decade and a half (following upon the great upheaval of 1914-18) has been abruptly enlarged. To such an extent has this been the case, that a new situation in the world, maturing since the Peace settlement, may be said suddenly to have attained adult stature.

What has been going on since last summer is much more than a storm in a teacup. The traditional 'sovereignties' of the free nations of Europe have been flung unceremoniously into a carefully prepared melting-pot, without so much as a by-your-leave. Whether they dissolve and lose their national identity (their traditional

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'sovereignty') according to the Moscow prescription of 'indivisibility', will depend upon the powers of resistance discovered by the mass of the nation in question.

The Baldwin Government has been the principal external and visible agent of this revolutionary operation. The very unexpectedness of the quarter from which this unorthodox attack has come has contributed to the relative success that has attended it. Spitting and fuming, half of the fifty-three 'States-members' of the League were got safely into the melting-pot.

So the lawyer has been substituted for the soldier (not necessarily a change for the better; though it is true that in 'mechanized' warfare the soldier will more and more cease to be recognizable, and tend to approximate to the poisoner and murderer of the police-court news). Anyway, civil war is coming to be tacitly regarded as the only legitimate war — except for 'wars-to-end-war', with their pettifogging 'boycotts', and elaborate usurious techniques. All other war has been dismissed as an 'anachronism'.

A very odd movement indeed, of the first historical magnitude, has declared itself at last in the course of these transactions. Mussolini's breaking of the Peace was the signal. What is this movement, then? Challenge this dark and visored stranger, and you learn, to your stupefaction, that its name is 'democracy'.

In fact, a particularly sardonic caricature of christianity has taken it into its head to treat us as if we were the Roman Empire. This is supposed to be our 'fall'! Mussolini is rather handy, as a matter of fact, to round off the picture, on account of his Roman Imperial pretensions. His *pax Romana* in Abyssinia fits in with Mr. Litvinov's 'indivisible' peace, as if it had been made for it. We are like a caste of clowns, play-acting the last days

NEW FORM OF WAR

of Rome, and the early days of christianity, the part of Christ played by a bankrobber and assassin — one of the two thieves upon either side of Jesus has somehow changed places with the original protagonist. But no one has noticed, apparently, this slight alteration.

§ 6

An 'altogether new form of war'

If the 'Peace' we have all been enjoying since 1914 has been rather an odd one (and we are only just learning why) the war that started last October is rather a funny sort of *war*! An 'altogether new form of war', indeed, has been in progress. It was for months completely stationary, or so profoundly dilatory as to appear at rest. There were no battles, because there was no enemy. And yet, although there was no enemy, the 'aggressor' did not advance. He built roads. Mr. Shaw was delighted with him and called him a boon to motorists. True, there were a good many troops present, but only to protect the road-makers from any savages who might be snooping round and who might be disposed to interfere — in the way that the mischievous savage will. There was scarcely anything bloodthirsty to make a fuss about.

Since that period, it is true, there has been a certain amount of movement: there have even been large skirmishes that might at a pinch be called battles. Even, in the last few weeks, casualties have been mentioned which reminds us of our monthly domestic casualty list of road-accidents. Even at last the so-called 'capital' of the country has been reached. But war in the European sense it has not been.

Mere soldiers were at a loss what to do; they were

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sent out to the Ethiopian Front by great newspapers, but they found that what the newspapers ought to have sent out was an engineer — a road, bridge, and railway expert. 'The difficulty of judging the strategy of this campaign is that one is apt to look on it as a military operation,' Major-General Fuller remarked. Mr. Eden, at Geneva, declared that there was not a minute to lose: 'Men are being killed!' he dramatically announced. But that was apparently just what was *not* happening. It was not 'a military operation' — (to quote Major-General Fuller again) — it was, in fact, 'one of *persuasion on the spot*, by a show of force, instead of at a distance. In its way this is altogether a new form of war.'

The only serious fighting that had occurred (up to Badoglio and Graziani's sudden advances) was outside Addis Ababa. There tribesmen came to the capital in response to the rumour that free rifles were being distributed, and began settling old scores among themselves. The Red Cross units who had been cooling their heels there for some time, at last found something to do. Of course the well-known bloodthirsty propensities of the Abyssinians were bound in the end to turn this exhibition of engineering skill on the part of the peaceable Italian 'invaders' into a most unsuitable brawl. But that is how it *began*. And what has been recently happening is the Abyssinians' doing, rather than the Italians', and mainly the fault of the Amharic despot and, of course, the League.

So it is not a sanguinary and merciless war — like, say, the Boer War — that is in progress. Whatever the Danakils, and other ruffianly aborigines, may have turned it into, there was no sign of anything of the kind in the first months. *That* is not why it is important — it is not because it is a *war*. And yet it is far more important, in fact, than

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any full-blooded French or English colonial campaign could possibly be. And — to put it in a few words — this is because one of the parties to this giant commercial undertaking, in a savage country, on the part of an impecunious state, is a fascist regime.

§ 7

Abyssinia the beginning of a Fascist world-revolution

So let us take this colonial war very seriously indeed. It may turn out to be the most bloodless colonial expedition on record — just as the recent revolution in Germany was the most bloodless revolution on record — or it may not. (The regard for human life displayed by fascist and Nazi, compared with the extreme disregard for life of the communist, from Lenin, Bela Kun, or Borodin downwards, is neither here nor there: we have not got to occupy ourselves with that.) It is not a bagatelle like human life we are talking about. We find ourselves involved in the clash of rival theories of government. And that cannot be decided anywhere but in Europe — where all the incipient civil-wars are liable at any moment to go off bang into a world-war: which will not be a war between states, but a war between parties, masquerading of course as states.

‘The guns of Adowa open a new epoch like the cannon of Valmy,’ we were told by Mr. Garvin, at the beginning of this affair — And we believe that what he said is true; many even in England have realized that this gesture of Mussolini’s, whether wise or foolish, marks the end of the uncomfortable armistice, which is all that the period of 1918-35 has been.

The morality or immorality of this campaign, of any

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campaign, aside — and what ‘military operation’ (and as such people have insisted on classing the Italian expedition) has ever been moral, except in the eyes of a theologian? — these are the first shots in the armed insurrection against the unjust Peace of Versailles. And the fact that it was in the deserts of Tigré and Tembien, or against the sand dunes of the Danakil, that the first shot was fired, is immaterial, from the standpoint of the major issue. That issue is to be sought here in Europe. And it affects us all as nearly as if the first shot had been fired in the Boulevard Housmann or in Ealing Broadway.

This is a social revolution, rather than a war. Ultimately that is what it will look like to the historian. Even to-day it looks like that to the politicians of the ‘left’. The common front in France and the socialists in England regard it as the beginning of a world revolution. It is not because it is *a war* that the latter object to it, as I have said, but because it is a *fascist* war. When Mussolini moved into Tigré in the first days of October last year it was an act of proletarian defiance: and it was in fact, the half (the *black* half, in contradistinction to the *red*) of ‘world-revolution’ going into action.

This is the best way of regarding it, if you wish to get its true, historic, perspective, and wish at all to understand what is being said and done on all sides, so patently out of proportion to what is visibly at stake.

No one, I think, approves particularly of Mussolini’s taste, or admires his idea as to *where* or *how* to start a war of liberation. His fellow ‘fascists’ in Germany certainly do not. That he was not guilty of an error of judgment, from the military standpoint — as was at first asserted — is now obvious, however. And that the industrious and ingenious Italian, rather than the lazy,

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stupid, and predatory Ethiopian, should eventually control Abyssinia is surely not such a tragedy. But it is as a sort of war of liberation, that these events in Abyssinia and Geneva must, essentially, be regarded — as an act of national self-assertion rather than as an irresponsible predatory raid.

All of us recognize, at this distance, that the war in which we were engaged from 1914-18 was in fact designed (by fate — we are debarred from imagining a more concrete creator) to serve as a backcloth for the Russian communist revolution. And the mountain scenery of Ethiopia is, on the same principle, the backcloth for the first phase of fascist revolution.

Mussolini, of course, is very rhetorical. He, like his critics, has insisted upon calling what he is doing a 'war'. And whereas the statesmen of the Great War declared that *their* war was a 'war to end war', the less apologetic authoritarian statesman of fascist Italy bluntly declares the opposite — namely that *this* war of his is a war to bring war back into its own again — almost a war for war's sake. It comes to much the same thing from the standpoint of the average soldier. There are men who might find it more agreeable to die in order that some hypothetical future man should be saved from bloodshed (in a 'League War'): others might rather resent the idea. It is a matter of national temperament.

At least on one point, however, Signor Mussolini is to be congratulated, in view of his well-known theoretic cult of combat to the death; namely, that he should have selected *Abyssinia*! What more apposite choice could he have made? There, as in no other country in the world, we are told, this particular cult exultantly flourishes. Reputed to be the most bloodthirsty savage in

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Africa, the Danakil, and the blackshirt diehard, must have enjoyed themselves together, in spite of the fact that this business could never be classed as a proper war.

That Mussolini may originally have contemplated something less symbolic than I have suggested above is quite possible. He has had this role thrust on him rather by the spectacular behaviour of Great Britain, in the person of her erstwhile Minister for League of Nations Affairs; with Mr. Litvinov bulkily manœuvring in the background, heavily weaving his great web of 'Peace'.

Who exactly decreed — and why — this sudden diplomatic offensive at Geneva it is of course idle to speculate. But Baron Aloisi had some justification for remarking that 'the responsibility for this situation lies indeed with the encouragement Ethiopia received in the discussions at Geneva'.

And we all share the bewilderment of the Italian People, whether or no we approved of their hearty encouragement of their high-handed leader — and whether we believe that the 'truth' has been violated, or merely feel that it has been insisted upon as it has never been insisted upon before in a similar case. — 'The Italian people cannot and will never be able to understand why such a misrepresentation of the truth has been undertaken only with regard to themselves.'

§ 8

The stupendous Press-polemic (1) against Germany, (2) against Italy

But the stupendous Press-polemic which preceded the outbreak of war, and immediately succeeded it — *that* is a thing in a class by itself. And that certainly did not

THE STUPENDOUS PRESS-POLEMIC

invariably bear the stamp of truth. It of course made the war in Abyssinia inevitable, by *daring* Mussolini, as it were, to do it. And it ensured the indefinite 'extensions of the area of conflict', if not to-day, to-morrow. But it did more than that. It made doubly certain the *liberational* character of the war, by proving to the Italian People that they were about to undertake something more significant than the wiping out of Adowa.

As to the Press-polemic; 'Through all the absurd weeks,' Mr. Garvin wrote (on October, 6th 1935) 'you heard of "Britain's stand for peace" and the rest. You were assured . . . that Mussolini would be cowed and ruined by threats, chiefly British and Russian, *worked up with a fortissimo of brass-band publicity at Geneva and in the Press. And that this method, unheard of in the annals of statesmanship at critical times, would prevent an Abyssinian war.*'

When Mr. Garvin said 'unheard of in the annals of statesmanship', he was perhaps overlooking a phase of statesmanship so very recent as to possess no 'annals' yet. There *was* another 'unheard-of' Press-polemic. Statesmanship by organized broadcast of misrepresentation, insult, and invective was not, as it happens, especially invented for the benefit of Mussolini. It had already been practised — without bloodshed (though this may have been deceptive, seeing the unarmed state of the victim) — upon Herr Hitler. Indeed it was still in full swing when the then Minister for League of Nations Affairs came briskly upon the scene. Its direction was momentarily altered, that was all.

That this technique of statesmanship by a pretence of 'open diplomacy' in an international parliament, and by organized Press-polemic — which can be guaranteed to magnify every molehill into a mountain — will be

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employed for this occasion only, is, one feels, extremely unlikely. Indeed, it is very improbable that now it will ever stop. From the left-wing standpoint it has been far too effective ever to let it subside. The Press will now be in an uproar indefinitely.

A 'new epoch' has been opened, there is little doubt of that. But it is merely the frantic face of 'Peace' dropping its mask at last, and showing behind it the familiar features of war; as that occurred conspicuously at the T.U.C. Congress at Brighton, in the course of last autumn, when by a card-vote of 20 to 1 the delegates declared themselves for military 'sanctions'.

§ 9

Roman Peace and 'Indivisible Peace'

In the peace that has followed the World War, European society has been so altered from what it was before, *not* because that War was so big or so prolonged — not because a normal 'post-war' period supervened — but because the War terminated in the establishment of Russian Communism, and found its consummation in the hysterical, savage, sanctimonious Peace of Versailles. It is those two closely associated facts which have made the Peace no peace at all, and which now has brought us face to face once more with the spectre of universal war.

These two instruments of disunion, internal and external, civil and international, have dominated everything else, and now have, finally, worked up the utterly

rod marked *oil, gold, coal*, etc. — to understand anything at all about what is going forward around him. He must be prepared to wrestle with Marxian dialectic, the Cabala, the Marcionite Heresy, the astronomical mathematics of High Finance, before he can begin to appreciate what this or that 'crisis' *really* signifies! Let him put oil and Sir Henry Deterding — nay let him put Sir Basil Zacharoff — for ever out of his mind! Let him resolutely abandon 'armament interests' (whether the Comité des Forges, Vickers, or Krupps) as an explanation. Mere money-making explains *nothing*. That was all right once upon a time, but not to-day.

Then the new role of the Press. A Press barrage in 1936 is a very different thing to what it was at the time, say, of the Balkan Wars. Political publicity changes as rapidly as the technique of aviation. And this publicity factor has transformed diplomacy. In place of its dear old traditional 'inscrutable' face, we have now a sort of frightful mask, compounded of crooked homeliness, of equivocal 'openness', and of sanctimonious exhibitionism. Oh, for the good old days of Mr. Maugham's 'impenetrable', aristocratic, wooden, ambassadors — monocled, polyglot, and aloof!

Well, *Murder Must Advertise!* So must diplomacy, it seems, or so diplomacy has come to think. And very extraordinary are some of the results.

Diplomacy, in the past, has generally been marked by 'secrecy', has it not? In essence it has been a game played behind closed doors. The Press has remained outside, as a sort of Greek chorus — babbling, shrieking, and moaning about what it apprehended might be going on within. It was a sort of official and a little ridiculous scaremonger. Its noise could be largely discounted.

MEDITERRANEAN: DANGER SPOT

But now that the Press has been admitted to the secret chamber, it still remains the official scaremonger; but of course, with very much more authority. — *Before* it was ostensibly an outsider, with no standing except that of a privileged gossip. *Now* it has become the official voice, almost, of statecraft.

But is this voice in consequence any more reliable? Is counsel not darkened, rather than the reverse, by the participation of the journalist in the most inner processes of diplomacy? Do we know any more about the Abyssinian Mystery, for instance, or the mystery of the Anglo-French relations, because the high contracting parties have used the Press so directly in their diplomatic exchanges? We have heard their very voices, bellowing away day by day, in furious debate, through the megaphones of their newspapers. Yet we are none the wiser.

§ 2

The Mediterranean — Danger Spot No. 1

I suppose that we may say at present that the crisis of the fever ostensibly caused by the introduction of the Abyssinian virus into the European body is past. Mr. Eden's activities have been transferred to the Rhine, and away from the Mediterranean. A new fever, nearer home, is in process of incubation. The American People having very sensibly refused to allow Mr. Roosevelt to inveigle them into a new European adventure, 'oil sanctions' have long ago receded into the background. So (always remembering that a relapse is possible, and that as a 'danger spot' the Mediterranean has made of Danzig, or Memel, a complete back-number — has

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indeed become Danger Spot No. 1) we may look back upon the Abyssinian affair to some extent as past history, especially since the fall of Addis Ababa, and the flight of the Negus.

And what an extraordinary chapter of history it has been! There has been nothing like it since the days of Bismarck. Posterity will star it as the most significant single event — or nexus of events — since the setting-in of the anti-Russian policy, presided over by Mr. Disraeli and the ultimate 'Peace with Honour', brought back from Berlin (Oh 'Peace' — has not that phrase a Litvinovian smack?), or since the passing of the old order in England (if you can fix a date for that) and the final triumph of 'the City' inaugurating a 'Bankers' Olympus'.

It is not of course an 'awakening'. The sending of the British Fleet to the Mediterranean had none of the characteristics of a conscious action. The naval might of England was hypnotically *sucked down* into that treacherous lake. It marks the moment at which the British People finally slumped into the apathy of sleep, what we have just passed through.

It might almost be said that, exhausted at last by the White Man's Burden, the English had subconsciously made up their minds — if one can say that — *to sleep whatever happened through this next war that was brewing!* So murmuring 'Peace', 'Collective Security', and 'We do trust you!' they fell asleep.

If to-morrow thermite bombs begin raining on our cities, that will merely be part of our nightmare. The nightmare began when our battleships steamed over the waters of Trafalgar, and were met — and saluted — by the 'sea-sleds' of Mussolini, come out to mock at this somnambulist Armada!

LOOKING BACK AT LAST YEAR

§ 3

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Looking back upon it, it has been an amazing broil. For the first time the entire 'left' wing of the world — not merely the 'common front' within any particular country — the 'common front' of internationalism in all the countries, storming week after week: all the Bench of Bishops roaring together: Mr. Lansbury calling upon all the hierarchies to repair to Jerusalem and proclaim the reign of Christ on earth: fifty-four countries agreeing with one voice to buy no more lemons from the wicked fascist 'lawbreaker': the 'Stresa Front' shattered overnight. Mr. Litvinov in the role of law-abiding citizen-of-the-world, in whose mouth unsanctioned butter would not melt, performing a frantic carmagnole in the centre of the stage: Mr. Baldwin squatting down and smoking the pipe of peace with the gunman who bumped off the Tsar and all his family circle: while 'Onward Christians Soldiers' was being community-sung by all the Free Churches, and the League of Nations Union, with Viscount Cecil as choir-master: the Paris Press resounding with far more anti-British sound and fury than at the time of Fashoda!

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And there are *other* adventures, far far 'greater' (as Mr. Churchill has indicated) than such as could be procured for us by a squalid little scrap with mere Wops.

Since this 'Great Adventure' is finally falling through, will the unwilling participants be provided, before long, with another, and even more undesirable and deadly one? Are such 'Adventures' really worth while? Is it not important that the rank and file should be — not deferred to or consulted, that would be absurd — but given a hazy idea of the true object of such disturbances? Is it really necessary to have a gaitered sky-pilot on the job? Were we being asked to 'fight fascism' just now; or to stop Mussolini from interfering with the Nile; or the Red Sea; or was it to enhance the political prestige of an ambitious politician; or were we to make the world safe for communism (or just *democracy*, as before); or to strike a blow for 'indivisible peace'; to challenge the 'anachronism' of *all* empires, or only of one; or merely to help Mr. Baldwin to be the leader of the Communist Party — or England to be the leader of the Balkan Entente; to prepare for an ultimate 'scrap' with Germany; or to get half our fleet sunk in the Mediterranean, so as to be able to build some new ships without interference from the T.U.C. — to further the interests of England, or (far more important) those of some internationalist abstraction? These are the sort of questions I have set out to canvass, with some temerity, I agree.

The world was very much upset by the sudden and totally unexpected genevan activity of Great Britain. There was a great deal of abuse of Great Britain not only in Italy, but in many other countries.

England was always supposed to be rather Laodicean where the League of Nations was concerned (the

A PASSION-PLAY

'protocol' was rejected as too entangling, and the Treaty of Locarno substituted, as the maximum commitment to which England was prepared to agree). In spite of the fact that a famous statesman has described the Covenant of the League as the greatest event since the composition of the New Testament, the Foreign Office had not been supposed to share that view. What made it change its mind with such uncouth precipitation? Reports from Secret Service agents that the fascist emperor had his eye on Egypt, or had enrolled a 'legion of death' to wipe out the British Fleet, say the wiseacres. I wonder!

§ 5

A passion-play

At the commencement of October, 1935, the Italian army invaded Abyssinia. And ensuing upon that act of war, the world has been mobilized by England against Italy. Whatever may subsequently come to pass, or be with luck avoided, one thing is quite certain: namely, that a portentous fissure which has been evident in human society for a decade and a half (following upon the great upheaval of 1914-18) has been abruptly enlarged. To such an extent has this been the case, that a new situation in the world, maturing since the Peace settlement, may be said suddenly to have attained adult stature.

What has been going on since last summer is much more than a storm in a teacup. The traditional 'sovereignties' of the free nations of Europe have been flung unceremoniously into a carefully prepared melting-pot, without so much as a by-your-leave. Whether they dissolve and lose their national identity (their traditional

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'sovereignty') according to the Moscow prescription of 'indivisibility', will depend upon the powers of resistance discovered by the mass of the nation in question.

The Baldwin Government has been the principal external and visible agent of this revolutionary operation. The very unexpectedness of the quarter from which this unorthodox attack has come has contributed to the relative success that has attended it. Spitting and fuming, half of the fifty-three 'States-members' of the League were got safely into the melting-pot.

So the lawyer has been substituted for the soldier (not necessarily a change for the better; though it is true that in 'mechanized' warfare the soldier will more and more cease to be recognizable, and tend to approximate to the poisoner and murderer of the police-court news). Anyway, civil war is coming to be tacitly regarded as the only legitimate war — except for 'wars-to-end-war', with their pettifogging 'boycotts', and elaborate usurious techniques. All other war has been dismissed as an 'anachronism'.

A very odd movement indeed, of the first historical magnitude, has declared itself at last in the course of these transactions. Mussolini's breaking of the Peace was the signal. What is this movement, then? Challenge this dark and visored stranger, and you learn, to your stupefaction, that its name is 'democracy'.

In fact, a particularly sardonic caricature of christianity has taken it into its head to treat us as if we were the Roman Empire. This is supposed to be our 'fall'! Mussolini is rather handy, as a matter of fact, to round off the picture, on account of his Roman Imperial pretensions. His *pax Romana* in Abyssinia fits in with Mr. Litvinov's 'indivisible' peace, as if it had been made for it. We are like a caste of clowns, play-acting the last days

NEW FORM OF WAR

of Rome, and the early days of christianity, the part of Christ played by a bankrobber and assassin — one of the two thieves upon either side of Jesus has somehow changed places with the original protagonist. But no one has noticed, apparently, this slight alteration.

§ 6

An 'altogether new form of war'

If the 'Peace' we have all been enjoying since 1914 has been rather an odd one (and we are only just learning why) the war that started last October is rather a funny sort of *war*! An 'altogether new form of war', indeed, has been in progress. It was for months completely stationary, or so profoundly dilatory as to appear at rest. There were no battles, because there was no enemy. And yet, although there was no enemy, the 'aggressor' did not advance. He built roads. Mr. Shaw was delighted with him and called him a boon to motorists. True, there were a good many troops present, but only to protect the road-makers from any savages who might be snooping round and who might be disposed to interfere — in the way that the mischievous savage will. There was scarcely anything bloodthirsty to make a fuss about.

Since that period, it is true, there has been a certain amount of movement: there have even been large skirmishes that might at a pinch be called battles. Even, in the last few weeks, casualties have been mentioned which reminds us of our monthly domestic casualty list of road-accidents. Even at last the so-called 'capital' of the country has been reached. But war in the European sense it has not been.

Mere soldiers were at a loss what to do; they were

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sent out to the Ethiopian Front by great newspapers, but they found that what the newspapers ought to have sent out was an engineer — a road, bridge, and railway expert. 'The difficulty of judging the strategy of this campaign is that one is apt to look on it as a military operation,' Major-General Fuller remarked. Mr. Eden, at Geneva, declared that there was not a minute to lose: 'Men are being killed!' he dramatically announced. But that was apparently just what was *not* happening. It was not 'a military operation' — (to quote Major-General Fuller again) — it was, in fact, 'one of *persuasion on the spot*, by a show of force, instead of at a distance. In its way this is altogether a new form of war.'

The only serious fighting that had occurred (up to Badoglio and Graziani's sudden advances) was outside Addis Ababa. There tribesmen came to the capital in response to the rumour that free rifles were being distributed, and began settling old scores among themselves. The Red Cross units who had been cooling their heels there for some time, at last found something to do. Of course the well-known bloodthirsty propensities of the Abyssinians were bound in the end to turn this exhibition of engineering skill on the part of the peaceable Italian 'invaders' into a most unsuitable brawl. But that is how it *began*. And what has been recently happening is the Abyssinians' doing, rather than the Italians', and mainly the fault of the Amharic despot and, of course, the League.

So it is not a sanguinary and merciless war — like, say, the Boer War — that is in progress. Whatever the Danakils, and other ruffianly aborigines, may have turned it into, there was no sign of anything of the kind in the first months. *That* is not why it is important — it is not because it is a *war*. And yet it is far more important, in fact, than

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any full-blooded French or English colonial campaign could possibly be. And — to put it in a few words — this is because one of the parties to this giant commercial undertaking, in a savage country, on the part of an impecunious state, is a fascist regime.

§ 7

Abyssinia the beginning of a Fascist world-revolution

So let us take this colonial war very seriously indeed. It may turn out to be the most bloodless colonial expedition on record — just as the recent revolution in Germany was the most bloodless revolution on record — or it may not. (The regard for human life displayed by fascist and Nazi, compared with the extreme disregard for life of the communist, from Lenin, Bela Kun, or Borodin downwards, is neither here nor there: we have not got to occupy ourselves with that.) It is not a bagatelle like human life we are talking about. We find ourselves involved in the clash of rival theories of government. And that cannot be decided anywhere but in Europe — where all the incipient civil-wars are liable at any moment to go off bang into a world-war: which will not be a war between states, but a war between parties, masquerading of course as states.

‘The guns of Adowa open a new epoch like the cannon of Valmy,’ we were told by Mr. Garvin, at the beginning of this affair — And we believe that what he said is true; many even in England have realized that this gesture of Mussolini’s, whether wise or foolish, marks the end of the uncomfortable armistice, which is all that the period of 1918-35 has been.

The morality or immorality of this campaign, of any

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campaign, aside — and what ‘military operation’ (and as such people have insisted on classing the Italian expedition) has ever been moral, except in the eyes of a theologian? — these are the first shots in the armed insurrection against the unjust Peace of Versailles. And the fact that it was in the deserts of Tigré and Tembien, or against the sand dunes of the Danakil, that the first shot was fired, is immaterial, from the standpoint of the major issue. That issue is to be sought here in Europe. And it affects us all as nearly as if the first shot had been fired in the Boulevard Housmann or in Ealing Broadway.

This is a social revolution, rather than a war. Ultimately that is what it will look like to the historian. Even to-day it looks like that to the politicians of the ‘left’. The common front in France and the socialists in England regard it as the beginning of a world revolution. It is not because it is *a war* that the latter object to it, as I have said, but because it is a *fascist* war. When Mussolini moved into Tigré in the first days of October last year it was an act of proletarian defiance: and it was in fact, the half (the *black* half, in contradistinction to the *red*) of ‘world-revolution’ going into action.

This is the best way of regarding it, if you wish to get its true, historic, perspective, and wish at all to understand what is being said and done on all sides, so patently out of proportion to what is visibly at stake.

No one, I think, approves particularly of Mussolini’s taste, or admires his idea as to *where* or *how* to start a war of liberation. His fellow ‘fascists’ in Germany certainly do not. That he was not guilty of an error of judgment, from the military standpoint — as was at first asserted — is now obvious, however. And that the industrious and ingenious Italian, rather than the lazy,

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stupid, and predatory Ethiopian, should eventually control Abyssinia is surely not such a tragedy. But it is as a sort of war of liberation, that these events in Abyssinia and Geneva must, essentially, be regarded — as an act of national self-assertion rather than as an irresponsible predatory raid.

All of us recognize, at this distance, that the war in which we were engaged from 1914-18 was in fact designed (by fate — we are debarred from imagining a more concrete creator) to serve as a backcloth for the Russian communist revolution. And the mountain scenery of Ethiopia is, on the same principle, the backcloth for the first phase of fascist revolution.

Mussolini, of course, is very rhetorical. He, like his critics, has insisted upon calling what he is doing a 'war'. And whereas the statesmen of the Great War declared that *their* war was a 'war to end war', the less apologetic authoritarian statesman of fascist Italy bluntly declares the opposite — namely that *this* war of his is a war to bring war back into its own again — almost a war for war's sake. It comes to much the same thing from the standpoint of the average soldier. There are men who might find it more agreeable to die in order that some hypothetical future man should be saved from bloodshed (in a 'League War'): others might rather resent the idea. It is a matter of national temperament.

At least on one point, however, Signor Mussolini is to be congratulated, in view of his well-known theoretic cult of combat to the death; namely, that he should have selected *Abyssinia*! What more apposite choice could he have made? There, as in no other country in the world, we are told, this particular cult exultantly flourishes. Reputed to be the most bloodthirsty savage in

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Africa, the Danakil, and the blackshirt diehard, must have enjoyed themselves together, in spite of the fact that this business could never be classed as a proper war.

That Mussolini may originally have contemplated something less symbolic than I have suggested above is quite possible. He has had this role thrust on him rather by the spectacular behaviour of Great Britain, in the person of her erstwhile Minister for League of Nations Affairs; with Mr. Litvinov bulkily manœuvring in the background, heavily weaving his great web of 'Peace'.

Who exactly decreed — and why — this sudden diplomatic offensive at Geneva it is of course idle to speculate. But Baron Aloisi had some justification for remarking that 'the responsibility for this situation lies indeed with the encouragement Ethiopia received in the discussions at Geneva'.

And we all share the bewilderment of the Italian People, whether or no we approved of their hearty encouragement of their high-handed leader — and whether we believe that the 'truth' has been violated, or merely feel that it has been insisted upon as it has never been insisted upon before in a similar case. — 'The Italian people cannot and will never be able to understand why such a misrepresentation of the truth has been undertaken only with regard to themselves.'

§ 8

The stupendous Press-polemic (1) against Germany, (2) against Italy

But the stupendous Press-polemic which preceded the outbreak of war, and immediately succeeded it — *that* is a thing in a class by itself. And that certainly did not

THE STUPENDOUS PRESS-POLEMIC

invariably bear the stamp of truth. It of course made the war in Abyssinia inevitable, by *daring* Mussolini, as it were, to do it. And it ensured the indefinite 'extensions of the area of conflict', if not to-day, to-morrow. But it did more than that. It made doubly certain the *liberational* character of the war, by proving to the Italian People that they were about to undertake something more significant than the wiping out of Adowa.

As to the Press-polemic; 'Through all the absurd weeks,' Mr. Garvin wrote (on October, 6th 1935) 'you heard of "Britain's stand for peace" and the rest. You were assured . . . that Mussolini would be cowed and ruined by threats, chiefly British and Russian, *worked up with a fortissimo of brass-band publicity at Geneva and in the Press. And that this method, unheard of in the annals of statesmanship at critical times, would prevent an Abyssinian war.*'

When Mr. Garvin said 'unheard of in the annals of statesmanship', he was perhaps overlooking a phase of statesmanship so very recent as to possess no 'annals' yet. There *was* another 'unheard-of' Press-polemic. Statesmanship by organized broadcast of misrepresentation, insult, and invective was not, as it happens, especially invented for the benefit of Mussolini. It had already been practised — without bloodshed (though this may have been deceptive, seeing the unarmed state of the victim) — upon Herr Hitler. Indeed it was still in full swing when the then Minister for League of Nations Affairs came briskly upon the scene. Its direction was momentarily altered, that was all.

That this technique of statesmanship by a pretence of 'open diplomacy' in an international parliament, and by organized Press-polemic — which can be guaranteed to magnify every molehill into a mountain — will be

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employed for this occasion only, is, one feels, extremely unlikely. Indeed, it is very improbable that now it will ever stop. From the left-wing standpoint it has been far too effective ever to let it subside. The Press will now be in an uproar indefinitely.

A 'new epoch' has been opened, there is little doubt of that. But it is merely the frantic face of 'Peace' dropping its mask at last, and showing behind it the familiar features of war; as that occurred conspicuously at the T.U.C. Congress at Brighton, in the course of last autumn, when by a card-vote of 20 to 1 the delegates declared themselves for military 'sanctions'.

§ 9

Roman Peace and 'Indivisible Peace'

In the peace that has followed the World War, European society has been so altered from what it was before, *not* because that War was so big or so prolonged — not because a normal 'post-war' period supervened — but because the War terminated in the establishment of Russian Communism, and found its consummation in the hysterical, savage, sanctimonious Peace of Versailles. It is those two closely associated facts which have made the Peace no peace at all, and which now has brought us face to face once more with the spectre of universal war.

These two instruments of disunion, internal and external, civil and international, have dominated everything else, and now have, finally, worked up the utterly

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disorganized world into a first-class crisis. And it is typical of what is in fact the inner truth of this situation, that Mr. Litvinov should be discovered firmly squatting at the centre of the genevan spider's web, the most implacable 'covenanter' of the lot. Like a mesmerized harvester or housefly, our Mr. Eden circles around those glittering eyes — so diabolically 'kindly', so Pickwickianly ferocious!

Good fortune brings us strange bedfellows, does it not? What is the principle of mutual respect and interest — let us return to that question — uniting the Government of Moscow and the great Imperialist Governments which control the League of Nations? It is really very simple. To *rule* you must first *divide* — and that holds good as much if the kind of government you contemplate is Marxian or Caesarian. Whether you aim at a 'Roman Peace' or at an 'Indivisible Peace' is all one. For all 'Peace' is the same which is set up and maintained by the sword, or by bomb and pistol — any 'Peace' of which you are the *master*: which you do not suffer, but impose.

Well, the League of Nations has *divided* the nations into two camps. So, if you are a person who desires to rule the world, you have no need to *divide it* yourself. It is already divided for you by the gentlemen at Geneva. So all you have to do is to bustle off to Geneva and offer your services to open up *still wider* this most useful and highly desirable breach, so that the law of *Divide and Rule* shall be satisfied up to the hilt.

The famous Covenant of the League of Nations was the perfect sequel to the revolution in Russia. It made Europe 'safe' for the bolshevist newcomer. Merely the legalistic instrument whereby the victors secured their

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spoils, and maintained the vanquished in a dishonourable subjection — as dishonourable to the top-dogs in this harsh ‘pact’ as to the under-dogs — it was doubtless obvious to the victors that they required all their spare energy to hold down their ‘bourgeois’ victims, and so they refrained from dissipating it in anti-communist crusades. What more could the most exacting sower of discord desire than the League of Nations? Here indeed is something made to his hand! and Mr. Litvinov has found it so, as events have abundantly proved.

Yes, it is really not such a paradox as all that, this foregathering at Geneva of dog and cat — of capitalist and of communist. It can be explained without invoking anything speculative, or likely to tax the sensitive credulity of the average man.

The old, ‘satiated’ democracies of Great Britain and France — for England can scarcely take on any *more* mandates or colonies, nor can France, seeing what a skeleton-crew of Frenchmen run those she has already got — these sorts of countries are never likely to cause trouble, as the communist sees it. These sleepy old lions ask nothing better than to be left in peace — to be left in ‘indivisible peace’, or in any other old peace you like, so long as it is *peace*! They treat their communists very well indeed, really in a very gentlemanly way (the Communist Party have about forty administrative offices in Paris alone, for instance — a communist is as much at home in Paris as in Moscow). Then these great bourgeois commonwealths are so well off and well fed that they are easily lulled into a semi-hypnotic slumber of security.

And so, provided you never have off your lips those magic vocables ‘security’ and ‘peace’, you can make them do almost anything you want them to do. Not

RED AND BLACK PRINCIPLE AT WAR

so those hungry outsiders, like Germany, Italy, or Japan. Bankrupt nobodies that they are, these countries are dangerous, very dangerous. The world will never be safe for communism so long as they are there. They are restless, sceptical, ironic, disgruntled devils, these big husky outsiders, who treat their communists *very* badly, and refuse (sometimes very rudely) to listen to arguments about brotherly 'indivisibility', or warblings about 'security' and 'peace'. And the League of Nations is an institution for keeping down precisely these troublesome, penniless, outsiders.

So there you are! The palace of the League of Nations is, next to the Kremlin, the most obvious place to look for Mr. Litvinov. And there, sure enough, you find him, at the present moment — very much at home, and plotting away to his heart's content.

§ 10

The Red Principle and the Black Principle at war

Let us resort to a figurative summary of the situation in Europe, and call in pictorial aid to enable the most backward mind to see how the warring principles of government are dangerously juxtaposed, and how it comes about that 'conservative' England is on the same side as soviet Russia.

The political landscape, if we were able to look down upon it from a passing airship, would appear somewhat as follows. Our bird's-eye view would show us a very considerable plain, on which ninety per cent of mankind passed their lives in a highly unpolitical manner. There

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they would be seen living much as they have always lived, although on the whole less comfortably.

Situated at either extremity of this very extensive plain we should remark two little ranges of rugged hills, in which two (relatively) active races of hillmen dwell, both bursting with political consciousness — both living a hard life but full of doctrinal pep.

We should learn, if we inquired, that the 'black' mountaineers on our right were called fascists, and the 'red' mountaineers on our left were called communists. Both were considered very troublesome neighbours, we should gather, by the good easy-going folk of the plain. We should acquire the further information that formerly both these mountainous regions were uninhabited. No one ever dreamed of going up there, except in moments of religious exaltation, when it was desired to be as uncomfortable as possible. It was only since the occurrence of a great warlike upheaval, twenty years previously, that certain groups of plainsmen, rendered a little unbalanced by all that had happened to them, had gone to live in these inhospitable high-places. By so doing they had become very hardy and muscular, and in consequence apt to stand no nonsense: they had established both of them a very reprehensible form of government — well, *personal* government (a very bad example for all the good democrats below): and the popularly-elected mayors of the various important townships of the lowlands feared and disliked both heartily.

But of the two they disliked the 'black' highlanders much more than they did the 'red': because, whereas the reds announced it as their intention quite simply to abolish the governments of the plain altogether as soon as they got the chance (which the governments in question

regarded as absurd and impossible), the *other* lot expressed themselves as determined to put an end to the corruption of these happy-go-lucky regimes, and to rule on similar (though better) lines in their stead. This appeared to the plainsmen's political leaders as a much more ungentlemanly point of view.

From our coign of vantage in the passing air-liner, we should notice signs of considerable excitement everywhere beneath us, both on the plain and in the hills above. As to the significance of all this disturbing bustle and disorder we should be unable to obtain any very satisfactory account. From what we heard we should gather, however, that a decisive struggle had started between the red principle and the black principle for the mastery of the plain. And it would certainly appear, at first glance, that the rulers of the plain were compacting with the reds (and their ultra-liberal and semi-red allies below) against their so-called 'totalitarian' adversaries. — But the anti-red mountaineers, on their side — though far less rich than the reds — were hastily arming themselves too (mainly on tick — being blackguards at bottom — and by all sorts of unorthodox financial devices); and they were evidently determined to *save the plain*, from what they described as 'the Red Menace'. A great and universal conflict was well under way: that would be as far as we should be able, from such an altitude, and in the face of issues so obscure, to unravel the matter.

ABYSSINIA: DRESS REHEARSAL FOR WORLD-WAR

§ I

What was biting Mr. Baldwin — or who?

WHY, last summer, did our politicians suddenly turn into crusaders? What motive had our good rulers in bringing this historical organism, the British Empire, swiftly to the brink of war — and war with Italy, of all countries, which had always been regarded as the traditional friend of England? What actuated Mr. Baldwin, in the creation of that strange office of 'Minister for League of Nations Affairs'? What inspired him to orientate British policy to a wholehogging internationalism — beside which such a body as the I.L.P. was made to look narrowly chauvinistic and tainted with 'nationalism'?

Various explanations have been advanced. More conventionally cynical minds have believed of course that *oil* is at the back of it. Official denials in such a case mean nothing: but there appears to be considerable doubt as to whether Abyssinia secretes oil at all, or enough for it to be worth while to mobilize capital on its account, or to mobilize men.

Then there is Lake Tsana, from which emanate the waters of the Nile. Egypt's life-giving river might be tampered with by a European 'dictator', if he sat where the Negus now sits. But that theory lost favour, and

WHAT WAS BITING BALDWIN—OR WHO?

people stopped advancing it. 'It is absurd to suggest,' Mr. Vernon Bartlett wrote in August, 1935, 'that the British Government would incur Italian enmity and risk being compelled to order the fleet into action, merely because it feared to see Italy in control of the waters of the Nile.'

Then there is the sea-route to India. Mussolini thinks in terms of a Roman imperium. And he makes no secret of the fact—very much the contrary. Would he be satisfied with Abyssinia? Libya is on one side of Egypt, Abyssinia on the other. Arabia is just across the Red Sea. He has even been said to fancy himself in the role of mandatory overlord of the Jewish National Home; and the Jews, it is known, are growing tired of English 'fairness'. Where would all this new-fangled empire-building-in-a-hurry end?

The average educated Englishman, I suppose, believes, on the whole, that Mr. Baldwin brought out his Bible, and pointed to the Ark of the Covenant of the League with an Old Testament gesture, and the Archbishops of Canterbury and of York buckled on their swords, for imperial reasons. The average educated Frenchman holds that view as well. It is the traditional touchiness of England where the sea-route to India is concerned that is *en jeu*—that has been all along the French view. Sir Samuel Hoare's reference to the 'idealism' of the English people in his October letter to the Quai d'Orsay only raised a smile (of considerable exasperation) in the Paris salons and cafés.

If this were the true explanation, the imperialist that is to be found just beneath the surface, if you scratch it, in every Englishman (according to the continental view) has been behaving uncannily true to type. Almost *too much*

so to be true — nay, even dementedly so. For it was a mad world in which we found ourselves in the autumn of 1935.

§ 2

The Men of the India Bill as 'defenders of Empire'?

What militates against, this being the correct explanation is the record of the Baldwin-Hoare administration, in the matter of India. That answer is conclusive. The men of the India Bill do not recommend themselves, exactly, to the attentive mind, for the role of dyed-in-the-wool imperialists. From *Barrackroom Ballads* to the unceremonious coercion of the Chamber of Princes, in favour of Babu politicians, is a long step. The men who — as that would appear in the eyes of Lord Salisbury or Mr. Churchill — 'gave away India', would scarcely have been likely to rush next minute into a dangerous quarrel, on the first hint of some distant possibility of obstruction to the waterways that join Great Britain to her Indian Empire.

But there are many observers who believed that the whole of this to-do was nothing but a mighty game of bluff, on one side and the other. Even, it was argued, that — having invaded Abyssinia — the Italians would, after an engagement or two, rest on their laurels. They would accept a profitable, face-saving compromise. As to the sanctions invoked by Russia and Great Britain,

that was diplomatic blackmail, too, it was believed. The Punch and Judy show would end with the eventual partition of Abyssinia — the three ‘Burglars’ who had been having high words over the prospective booty of the last black kingdom (judged up to the present so difficult to subdue that the game was not worth the candle) would sit down and drink to each other’s health over a bottle of champagne from M. Laval’s cellar. That was once the idea; though to-day there are very few people who have not come to the conclusion that the matter was far more complex than that.

§ 3

The Theory that England wished to smash the League

Another widely held opinion was that Great Britain had set out to smash the League. This theory took several different forms. Here is the most orthodox. There would obviously be no better way of finishing off the League, if you wanted to (it was said) than to show up the true nature of that questionable institution by insisting, in season and out of season, upon the fulfilment of the letter of the Covenant. Since the League, up to 1935, had merely existed to secure the political supremacy of France on the continent of Europe, and since a short while ago France had contracted a very pleasurable and profitable alliance with Italy, the present case — where Italy had started breaking all the ten commandments of

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the League at once — was definitely *out of season*. It was a case where everyone was expected by France to put the telescope to the blind eye. So England bustled up, loudly denounced Italy, and brutally demanded the most drastic sanctions against the culprit.

The trouble about that theory was that the half-heartedness of France where the implementing of the Covenant was concerned had been manifested so flagrantly that surely the British Government could, long ago, before Laval was forced to accept sanctions, have turned its back in disgust and said, 'Really we do not care any longer to play this stupid and one-sided game'; and the League would have duly collapsed. Mr. Eden had been far too thorough, in other words, for that theory to be acceptable.

Kurt von Stutterheim (quoted by *World*, August, 1935) gave it as his opinion that it had been the intention of the British Cabinet to drive Italy out of the League, to give the present League the *coup de grâce*, and then to bring into being a smaller and more efficient League.

'Perhaps Italy's retirement,' he wrote, 'might prove the very cause of new life being infused into the League by way of reforms. "The League is dead — Long live the League!" — a League which would not be the old useless monster machine, but one whose tasks were smaller but capable of being carried out. England hopes . . . one day, to get back Italy into a less ambitious but more practical League.'

This theory could not recommend itself to any observer who had witnessed the way England had gone about it — the violence of the expulsion that had been in progress, and the repeated kicks that had been found necessary to dislodge the reluctant Duce. Then it was

DIPLOMATIC CROSS-WORD PUZZLE

after all England who effected the exodus of Germany from the League (Sir John Simon, it will be remembered, delivered the final kick in a hectoring speech at Geneva). Had England at that time, are we to understand, matured the eccentric plan of kicking all the big Powers out one by one (at the same time that she invited Russia in)? And was it her intention, last but not least, to dispose in the same way of the French — of France, the quondam proprietor?

§ 4

Other solutions of the diplomatic cross-word puzzle

Another favourite thing to say — both in England and abroad — has been that the National Government was thinking in terms of domestic politics and merely engaged in window-dressing preparatory to a General Election. The event has disproved that, I think: and that was, anyway, putting too great a strain upon the picture of a group of hypnotized enthusiasts of the traditional party-game, each jauntily perched upon a keg of gunpowder. It is an eighteenth-century cartoon. That is *period*-thinking.

But there has been no theory too unlikely to be at one time and another advanced, to account for a situation that frankly puzzled everybody. Here is a typical one. It came from Warsaw, and was reported in *The Times*, about the middle of October, 1935. 'Why does Great Britain,' asked the official *Gazeta Polska*, 'herself always ruthless in the use of force against the coloured races, so energetically oppose Italian plans in connection with Abyssinia?' And this was the *Gazeta Polska's* conclusion. 'Great Britain fears the consequences of a war in Africa —

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not the consequences in Europe, but in other parts of the world. It may seem paradoxical, but Great Britain is afraid of an Italian failure. Great Britain doubts whether Italy possesses the resources to ensure a complete victory. In their moments of sincerity Englishmen admit that if the conquest of Abyssinia had been a simple matter Great Britain herself would have undertaken it long ago.'

In a moment of sincerity let us say at once that this is one of the stupidest theories that this diplomatic crossword puzzle had so far elicited.

While we are on the subject of sincerity, it may be as well to point out that there is practically no one, outside of Colney Hatch, who believes that there is a spark of sincerity in the purely moralistic aspect of the dispute. The specific coloration of the Baldwinian mind is certainly there; but this coloration, like the lighting in a theatre, is under excellent control. So that can be dismissed from our minds.

The time factor enters a great deal into these theories. At one moment one theory has been in the ascendant, at another it was a quite different one. The *Yorkshire Post* (Oct. 17th, 1935) insisted that 'the Abyssinian campaign is not in the least what Italy would like to make it appear, a "simple colonial affair".' But if it was not that, but something different, and something more, what are these other and more comprehensive aims of the Italians? 'Much difficulty is being felt by many people,' the *Yorkshire Post* declared, 'in this and other countries in obtaining from day to day a broad picture of the international situation created by Italy's invasion of Abyssinia. There are, as presumably everybody realizes, a number of visible aspects of the situation, but there are also a number of actual or potential repercussions which are not so immediately obvious.'

BALDWIN AND 'BLOOD-BALLOTTERS'

But all these aspects and repercussions, whether obvious to the general public or not, are exercising various minds in various countries and are producing, in consequence, a crop of rumours which in turn, when they reach the Press, help to befog its readers.' And of course the process of befogment has gone on steadily from day to day.

§ 5

Mr. Baldwin and the 'Blood Balloters'

Mr. Amery, M.P., in speaking at Sparkbrook (October 16th, 1935), referred to a theory which holds its ground pretty well, and which is, in fact, a composite one. It weds the *Theory of Electoral Window-dressing* to that of *Smashing the League*. And it was probably the theory with the greatest number of intelligent adherents on October 16th, 1935. This is what Mr. Amery said:

'Unless the Government were really prepared to push matters to the extreme of war, providing they could somehow secure the consent of others to such a course, he could not conceive of any reason why they should not say so here and now. There was one motive for silence which he was almost ashamed to suggest. That was that they wished the responsibility for rejecting extreme measures to be undertaken by France, so that they might still be able to say to their new-found pacifist allies that there was no length to which they would not have gone if others had supported them. He could not believe that any British Government would be capable of such irresponsibility, or such meanness, and therefore he dismissed the suggestion.'

To stew the 'Blood Balloters', as they were named by

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Lord Castlerosse, in their own juice, and at the same time to fry France in her own fat — that is the principle that is adumbrated in this view, as that actuating our government. Having stolen the thunders of the organizers of the ballot, the National Government would proceed to sail in on their votes at the last election. But France — by hanging back and sabotaging the Covenant — would have relieved them of the necessity of resorting to the pacifist's blood-bath. And the defection or reluctance of France (up till now the backbone of the League) would enable Great Britain to dissociate herself from the more dangerous commitments of an international policy, the League having died a natural death.

The principal objection to this theory is that it presupposes a much deeper cleavage between the very tainted and 'left'-wing conservatism that we have got and the 'Blood-Balloters' than in fact exists. Mr. Baldwin is, I believe, prepared for the arguments of blood and iron, not as much as an out-and-out pacifist would be, but almost as much.

In the Cabinet, the reputed conscientious objectors have been Mr. Neville Chamberlain, Lord Hailsham, etc. It is supposed to be about fifty-fifty for and against zealous participation in European politics. The warlike half — which would be the left-wing — would no doubt insist, in discussing the matter with their right-wing colleagues, upon the imperial aspect of the dispute. When Mr. Amery and his friends pay a visit of protest to Downing Street, for instance, the P.M. swears them to secrecy, and then, it is to be assumed, freezes their blood with Secret Service tales of Fascist Empires, threatening the British colonies and the British flag. For it is unlikely that Mr. Baldwin speaks with the same voice when

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addressing a 'diehard' conservatism as when talking, *à cœur ouvert*, with his protégé, Mr. Eden, or with Sir Robert Vansittart.

§ 6

Finally — the Theory of the Dress-Rehearsal for World War

So much for the theories entertained, at one time and another, which, in part, or *in toto*, we should, to my mind, reject. I will now proceed to consider the explanation to which I can find the fewest objections. It is the hypothesis which, I find, accounts for the maximum number of facts, though of course not all. And it seems to satisfy most nearly that obscure equation: Litvinov — Great Britain.

The Burglar Theory I am disposed to accept, to start with: but I do not believe that the 'Burglars' have been publicly quarrelling about what Sir Stafford Cripps has pointed to as the uncomplex and traditional cause. I favour a variant upon this. I will state it for what it is worth — for I am in the dark as much as any other man-in-the-street. And I claim no originality for the view I shall advance.

We have to look, I believe, in what has gone before to find the true sense of all this uproar.

When feeling against Germany had been worked up for a long time, and the result, although promising up to a point, had to contend, it was found, against a settled

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feeling on the part of the plain man that, although the Germans were — as ever — extremely wicked, that it was yet hardly worth while for the English nation to go and get itself massacred all over again to put them on the road to higher things — at *that* stage of the proceedings it was asserted, in one of the more enlightened left-wing newspapers, that Mr. Eden regarded the League of Nations as the only hope for 'Peace'. By that time, I need not add, we all knew what 'Peace' meant.

The English nation would never be persuaded, to take the plunge (so Mr. Eden was said to believe) and to pop on khaki again and allow its Government to declare war on Germany (if that should prove *necessary*, of course) *except* through the agency of the League of Nations.

If such a lovely idealistic thing as the League of Nations told it to, then it might do so. But otherwise, if Mr. Baldwin should tell it to do so, it would in all probability turn Mr. Baldwin out. And of course no one but a *soi-disant* conservative prime minister could do it at all: for if a socialist P.M. attempted to bring on a European War, even his own followers would revolt and tell him that that was *not*, after all, socialism.

According to this theory, which is one I am inclined to favour, as a starting-point, all that we have seen happening in Geneva since the summer of 1935 could be in the nature of a dress-rehearsal. In other words — to use verbatim what Mr. Amery said in his speech at Sparkbrook (October 8th, 1935) 'What has created the crisis has been the British Government's determination to make this *a test case* of the effectiveness of the League of Nations as an instrument for the *forcible* prevention of war.' The word *forcible* is what you here have to underline; in other words, *the prevention of war by means of war*.

HOW DRESS-REHEARSAL MISCARRIED

‘A test case’ for blowing up the world — which is what a new European War would mean — that was what this was intended to be. A dangerous experiment, certainly: but faint heart never won fair lady. And ‘Peace’ is of course a peach worth fighting for — again and again, and yet again.

§ 7

How the Dress-Rehearsal Plan miscarried

Something evidently went wrong with this plan, almost from the start. Italy has shown far more spirit than was anticipated. Even, Italy answered back, at once, with shocking vehemence. Things got seriously out of hand, which is a way that things have of doing. The dress-rehearsal for an ultimate conflict (of a more important nature, nearer home) looked for some weeks as if it might turn into *the first night of the play*, so to speak, out of hand! But that seems to be where we have to look for the initiation of all these extraordinary proceedings. Addis Ababa was the roundabout road to Berlin.

§ 8

Objections to the Theory of the Dress-Rehearsal

This explanation cannot be adopted, however, without reserve. There are several facts which appear to tell against it. Chief among these, perhaps, is the Anglo-German naval agreement.

That was a very mysterious happening if you like. It makes Englishmen scratch their heads — no wonder it just left the poor foreigner hopelessly guessing. Mr. Baldwin is roaring at one moment that our frontier is the Rhine; and the next a bilateral naval pact is quietly and expeditiously being signed with the more wicked of the two races who dwell upon the banks of that noble stream — and all in the twinkling of an eye, and before the Quai d'Orsay can say *knife* — before the French have time to protest, and 'behind their backs', as they have clamoured ever since! How are you going to make that fit into the Theory of the Dress-Rehearsal (Rehearsal of war against Hitler)?

Then, again, there are Sir Samuel Hoare's speeches and letters of last year, at the time he was Foreign Secretary. His distasteful and uncalled-for insistence upon 'elasticity' — his remark that the mere non-observance or breaking of the clause of a treaty was not actionable (or *sanctionable*) which annoyed our French friends so much at the time: what are we to make of that? Indeed there is nothing about Sir Samuel Hoare — in distinction to Mr. Eden — which quite conformed to the required pattern — of the *Theory of the Dress-Rehearsal*.

There are several other important considerations; and before proceeding with the evulgation of this particular

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theory, the sort of obstacles with which it would have to contend, before it could satisfy the more exacting historian of these events, should be specified; and the important reservations one would have to make examined, one by one.

§ 9

The British Government as unwilling Imperialists

As a trial spin — a ‘test case’ — that is how such an experienced politician as Mr. Amery regarded the mobilization of world opinion against Italy. And that, I believe, is the essence of the matter. Manœuvres under wartime conditions, with a sprinkling of live shells among the blanks, Mr. Eden’s big idea at Geneva (or the big idea of whoever it may have been who prompted and inspired Mr. Eden). But I should not be prepared to admit such a simplification as would deny its part to the famous ‘Mediterranean complex’ of Great Britain, for instance. Any British Government, however inclined to look upon the British Empire as something to be thoroughly ashamed of (and which it was desirable to camouflage in every possible manner, until it at least *looked* relatively respectable and unimperialistic) would all the same be averse to going down to history as the government which was caught napping by a dago dictator (in collusion with the Frogs), and which had allowed its main strategic artery to be severed, and so had lost three hundred million subjects (or ‘fellow-citizens’) at one fell swoop.

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Mr. Bernard Shaw, alone among those who have contributed to this discussion, noticed what a very odd document was that letter of Sir Samuel Hoare's in October last. With his customary impudence Mr. Shaw went so far as to declare that this Hoare letter signified that England would not fight, except if all the other boys were in it too: and as they none of them wanted to be (except our good old bolshevik standby) that settled it.

'If I am right,' wrote Mr. Shaw, 'Sir Samuel agrees with me that we must keep out of it, whereas all the anti-fascist forces are supporting him in the belief that he is heading a rush into it.' In other words, England never had any intention of getting mixed up in *her own* war; or of getting smothered in the poison-gas of Russia's 'Peace'.

§ 10

The Isolationist view

Then let us hear Lord Beaverbrook, or rather his paper the 'isolationist' *Evening Standard*, which has been replete with dignified horse-sense throughout this baffling period. The following passage is from an issue of about the same date as Mr. Shaw's pronouncement.

LEAGUE'S 'FIFTY-FIFTY' CHANCE.

'Laying aside much cant, the Government's present attitude to international affairs may be summarized thus:

'The League had to be tried out. If not, the Peace Balloters would have been able to argue, as they did about the Manchurian crisis, "If only Great Britain had given a lead and come out strong for the Covenant, etc. etc."

'The Italo-Abyssinian conflict provides an ideal occasion for trying out the League, since Italy is particularly

THE ISOLATIONIST VIEW

vulnerable where economic pressure is concerned, and has disregarded her League obligations about as flagrantly as they could be disregarded.

‘If the League works on this occasion it will work all the better if and when Germany kicks over the traces. If it does not work, then its impracticability will have been demonstrated once and for all.

‘The chances of its working were put to me at fifty-fifty. This I thought fabulously sanguine.

WILL BRITAIN LEAVE?

‘In any case, the Peace Balloters had to be given a practical demonstration of the implications of the policy they advocated. It has shaken them.

‘Some have already reverted to conscientious objection but the bulk are ready for a second round.

‘The real crux of the matter, it seems to me, lies in what line the Government and the Peace Balloters will take if and when it is proved beyond a shadow of doubt that the League is incapable of preventing an Italian conquest in Abyssinia.

‘Will they then have the courage and the good sense to admit the League’s failure and have done with it, or will they drag on the miserable farce through yet another act?’

As you will observe, the Theory of the Dress-Rehearsal is here tastefully combined with that of the theory that domestic politics are responsible for all this foreign political activity — with what we may name the Theory of Electoral Window-dressing. It is suggested that the British Government would not be altogether disappointed if the League was proved an unworkable sham. The Peace Ballot had to be checkmated somehow. So the Government said, in effect: ‘Very well, if you want

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sanctions, let us have them! Let us see how, *in practice*, they work out.' But for some reason this newspaper doubted whether, once having proved it's impracticability up to the hilt, the Government would then insist on reversing its international policy, and leave the League. It has been proved right. It knew its Pappenheimer, that is its Baldwin, far too well — being a Beaverbrook paper, it refused to jump to too optimistic conclusions.

§ 11

The objection on the score of the 'conservatism' of Mr. Baldwin

A last complication where the Theory of the Dress-Rehearsal is concerned and then I will be done with the objections. 'If the League works on this occasion it will work all the better if and when Germany kicks over the traces.' *That is the pure Theory of the Dress-Rehearsal.*

But why should Great Britain mind so much if Germany 'kicked over the traces'? That question has to be dinned into people's ears. Supposing that Germany *did* succeed, some day, in dealing a mortal blow to Russian Communism, and 'expanded' to the East (into the U.S.S.R. that is, in concert with Poland) as Hitler is supposed to contemplate doing — what of it? What of it, that is, from the standpoint of the most capitalist of all 'capitalist' governments, namely that of Great Britain? Why should the great Money Interest so much object? Or are we asked to believe that *they* possess an overmastering admixture of that English 'idealism' (cf. Sir Samuel Hoare) too? Why, after all, it might be asked, should the world be made *so safe as all that* for communism? On what grounds should the British Government, more than the German, or Hungarian, show such a tender regard for 'the Great

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Russian Experiment'? Is it possible that *any* British conservatism, however liberal, or left-wing, in its complexion, should contemplate another war to end war, in which great numbers of Englishmen would be condemned to death or mutilation in battle — apart from the spectacular slaughter to be expected on the 'home front' — all to help forward 'world-revolution' — this bloodstained 'rationalization' of human society we call communism? That does not appeal to our common sense.

§ 12

French Policy, too, has its mysteries

The above complication I have already dealt with, and I will presently deal with it again. The complication I particularly had in mind at the moment is rather that involved in the disgraceful indifference shown in all these transactions by the French Government towards that apple of its eye '*le Pacte*' — the Covenant of the League. Upon that let us turn our astonished eye.

Mme Tabouis exaggerates, for she is a left-wing lady. But there is an element of mystery somewhere in the present policies of France. I will quote from the *Manchester Guardian*, from some foreign-news matter headed —

FRANCE'S 'INCOMPREHENSIBLE' POLICY

'Paris. October 10.

'Perhaps the most candid criticism of the French policy at Geneva that has come from anyone in France outside the Socialist and Communist camps is published in the *Oeuvre* to-day by Mme Tabouis.

'She says: "The truth is that among a very large number of delegates at Geneva the present policy of the

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French Government is considered incomprehensible. For sixteen years, they say, regardless of the political colouring of her Governments, France has been conducting a League of Nations policy, has been defending the Covenant, and has been aiming at a renewal of the Entente Cordiale with England, either directly or through the League, to come and share with her the responsibility of defending the Covenant and the system of collective security.

“During the past two months the world is amazed to observe a real change in Britain’s attitude and now, at the very time when England is prepared to join France in supporting the Covenant, including article 16, France suddenly refuses or beats about the bush and seems to turn her back on the League and allows her Press to say all sorts of unkind things about the British Government. In spite of all this, Great Britain enters into conversations with France and asks her point blank — *Will your navy come to my assistance?* Instead of welcoming the note whole-heartedly, France sends back a long piece of pure casuistry which can only play into the hands of Germany.”

The behaviour of *both* the French and the British Governments has been, then, ‘incomprehensible’. And, as I have said, there is perhaps something that requires explaining. *All* these people have been behaving paradoxically. What has been the matter with them? That is what we should like to find out.

How the French coolness (especially under Laval’s premiership) regarding ‘sanctions’ might be considered to militate against the *Theory of the Dress-Rehearsal* is obvious. For in that bloody tragedy for which the Mediterranean maritime tattoo has been but the dress-rehearsal,

GREAT BRITAIN'S ALIBI

France would be the principal player. 'France has one "King Charles's head" and it is Germany,' as Mr. A. G. Gardiner has said. And here was France forgetting, for the first time, her King Charles's head. A most unaccountable oversight. And Great Britain would not proceed with these rehearsals all by herself.

How would the theorist of the Dress-Rehearsal dispose of this snag? Somewhat as follows. He would point out that the behaviour of the French Government had not been so mystifying as all that. That of the British, certainly: but not the French. For was not their Italian alliance at stake? The French had shifted an army corps or two from the Alps to the Rhine. Back it would have to go again. The French enthusiastically assented, no doubt, that a rehearsal for the Big Kill beyond the Rhine was a capital idea. But England put her back into it overmuch. This British zeal was likely from the outset to defeat its own ends. That would be how the out-and-out theorist of the Dress-Rehearsal would argue. But, on my part, a doubt will still subsist. The French *have been* behaving a little incongruously. But the Franco-Italian entente contrived by M. Laval may have been even wider in scope than was supposed. What kind of things would that wider understanding embrace?

§ 13

Great Britain's alibi

The answer to that question will take us too far, and involve too many considerations which have only an indirect bearing upon the solution of the Great Sanctions Mystery, for me to be able to proceed with it under the same heading. So let me conclude my analysis of what

led the British Government suddenly to set Europe by the ears at Geneva — to deal a death-blow to the 'Stresa Front', and generally to behave after such a violent and unexpected fashion.

On February 20th, 1936, there was a great political sensation. *The Giornale d'Italia* published a confidential report of the committee presided over by Sir John Maffey, the Civil Service head of the Colonial Office. This report was made to the Foreign Office in June, 1935. It was marked SECRET. Although it does not seem to have been so secret as all that, its publication by the Italians caused a great stir.

The Foreign Office had wanted to know how the Italian occupation of Abyssinia would affect Great Britain: and this expert report replied, to this inquiry, to cut a long story short, to the effect that it would be the best thing that could happen. Here is what it said about British Somaliland: 'Nor can there be any doubt about the advantages which would result from the satisfaction of having nearby an efficient frontier administration such as the Italians would possess instead of the present Abyssinian administration.'

Further, the 'Maffey Committee honestly recognized the righteousness of the Italian thesis', say the Italians. 'The date of that report was June 18th, 1935. The sharpening of British polemics against Italy, as well as the concentration of the British Fleet in the Mediterranean, occurred shortly after that date.'

So the British Government, having assured itself of the righteousness of the Italian thesis, and having made quite certain that *no* English interests were involved, sent its fleet to threaten Italy. A peculiar sequel! Have we not clean hands?

The upshot of the whole affair was that the Italians claimed that this report made it clear that 'exclusively British interests were under discussion', and that 'the League was not mentioned at all'. To this the British retorted that since the report demonstrated that 'exclusively British interests' were in no way affected by Italy's invasion of Abyssinia, that *therefore* it was perfectly plain that England, it could be said, acted *against* the purely selfish interests of England.

I am bound to say that the British answer appears to me final and unassailable. The publication of this report helps, in the most striking manner, the Theory of the Dress-Rehearsal. Unquestionably the British Government *have been* acting against the purely selfish (that is to say purely English) interests involved. They have been sacrificing, in other words, the *national* interest of England to other interests. And those other interests, in the final analysis, would be seen to be *international*. Indeed, the openly 'internationalist' pattern of British policy should leave no doubt in our mind, upon this head. The British Government may be acquitted absolutely of having had in mind the 'selfish' (the national) interest of England!

The *Popolo d'Italia* ended up its diatribe against England, on this occasion, as follows:

'The British policy is replete with mysteries. What is the meaning of this policy from the beginning of the Italo-Abyssinia dispute until to-day?'

§ 14

The Mystery of British Policy, and the difficulties of the Detective

Well, I have been attempting to discover, for a good many pages now — to lay bare *the meaning of this policy*; adopting the method of assembling and comparing all the contradictory explanations advanced to account for it. British policy is 'replete with mysteries'. And I do not pretend that I have succeeded in tearing aside the veil. But at least I have done something, I believe, towards clearing up the dark places of 'open diplomacy', and have provided certain useful pointers and signposts.

In my next section I shall be considering the *dessous* of the Laval-Mussolini agreement. And a glance at those backgrounds of Mediterranean intrigue will suffice to show you how complex is the material in the midst of which the political detective has to hunt for *a motive*.

In this detective story the crime has not yet been committed. The crime is the Great War which is in preparation. But, potentially, the *Corpse* is there all right. Indeed, there are millions of corpses virtually there already. Most people are agreed that a Great War is unavoidable. But the *alleged* motive seems, at least to this detective, quite inadequate. The Mussolinian rumpus remains 'mysterious'. And the motive, in the first instance — entangled, it is true, with all sorts of more obvious considerations — of that Attempted Murder (as one might call it) are to be sought, I believe, in the interests pushing us towards a far more spectacular and comprehensive 'kill'.

CHAPTER III

GREAT BRITAIN GROWS UNPOPULAR

§ I

The 'All Socialist' situation in England

THAT a dual role is imposed upon a statesman who embraces, for whatever motive, a theory at variance with his ostensible function, must be obvious. And any British statesman is, ostensibly, an 'imperialist', dedicated to all the peculiar tasks devolving upon the executive of an outstanding land-owning (and hence *conservative*) nation.

But all the puzzling 'jumps' in recent British foreign policy, which have been so widely commented upon abroad, all the glaring contradictions, denounced by our continental critics, are to be traced to a duality, resulting from the association of this inescapable 'imperialist' function, with an internationalist theorizing with which it is not compatible.

This duality, in the political mind of Britain, does not, I think, depend (as it is customary to argue) upon the hybrid character of so-called 'national' government — which affects to represent all parties in the state, from socialism (as illustrated in the person of Mr. Ramsay Macdonald) to the diehard tory (as acted by Sir Basil Blench), and so has to double upon itself, in its effort to be at both ends of the parliamentary see-saw at one and the same moment.

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The duality would be there just the same without that complication. 'We are all socialists to-day,' asserts Sir John Simon. And that observation embraces, in its general sweep, the present Prime Minister, Stanley Baldwin, who is the greatest living exponent of dual-personality in politics.

The 'socialism' would be there just as much if Mr. Baldwin had not decided to pose as such a synthetic Briton, as to make party otiose. And that alone would account for a good deal of duality.

But the present aggravation of this duality is due to the considered acceptance by Mr. Baldwin of the 'indivisible' objects of the new bourgeois-bolshevism. Mr. Baldwin stands at the extreme right wing of bourgeois-bolshevism: but nevertheless the 'common front' of democracy and communism *includes* Mr. Baldwin as truly as it does M. Herriot.

But this 'all-socialist' situation in England has to be accounted for. However startling its recent avatars, there is the predisposing character. And that, certainly, may be described as *national*.

The line-up in Europe at present is proceeding in accordance with these national, or racial, predispositions—that, coupled with self-interest. A nation like the Hungarian, for instance, responds to leadership in a different way from the Swiss. That you cannot change.

So, if we go behind the 'all socialist' situation in English politics, we do find something still more fundamental. We find the English, in their natural state: the Saxon, the Angle, and the Jute.

§ 2

The English and the Scandinavian Peoples

In temperament, and in political philosophy, the English are remarkably like the Scandinavians. They are much more like them than they are like any other people. The Danes and the Swedes are the nearest approach, psychologically, to the English. The French, their nearest neighbours, are poles apart from them, of course.

The Englishman of to-day, having got rid of his aristocratic leaders (with the assistance of Mr. Disraeli) has reverted to type in the most remarkable way. We tend to forget for how long the French language was spoken by the English Court: and as late as the eighteenth century there was a significant racial cleavage between the minority, the 'ruling class', and the native John Bull who made up the easy-going bulk of the nation. But it was that enterprising minority, of magnificent leaders, who, ultimately, were responsible for the great position occupied by England among the nations at the present time. They were superbly seconded by the grimly valorous Boys of the Bulldog Breed. But it was the *leadership* that worked the miracle.

The Englishman is no politician: politically he stands apart, perhaps a thought conceitedly above the *mêlée*. He inhabits a comfortable vacuum. *Weltpolitik* is the last thing that the average Englishman is inclined to dabble in. He possesses the sturdy parochial mind of the citizen of a small and unimportant state. To match his temperament England should by rights be a tight little, right little, country about the size of Denmark.

Of his own volition, the Englishman would never have

GREAT BRITAIN GROWS UNPOPULAR

done much more than fish up and down the English Channel, and potter about the North Sea. The Scot is a very different kettle of fish; but his English neighbour to the south would never have been found in every corner of the earth like the enterprising Caledonian.

It is, I hope, unnecessary to say that this is not a disparagement of the Englishman. What more agreeable than the life of a fisherman? Happy is the country without a history. A man's a man for a' that — whether his disposition inclines him to cultivate his garden, or whether, on the other hand, it drives him far afield, in the interests of a vaulting ambition. One man loves power, and another placid pleasure.

If you accept this estimate of the great majority of the inhabitants of England, you will at once see that a rather curious, not to say *piquant*, situation has come to pass. Although I am not sure that it is not rather a national *tragedy* I am describing, as things are shaping to-day.

Here is a small, open-air-minded, not unduly imaginative people — cut out by nature, one would say, to inhabit a nice little agricultural state, upon the misty fringes of the great metropolitan world — fishing away unmolested, smoking their bacon, and growing excellent potatoes — envied by no man. But, behold, this unhappy people *has a history*. It has got to itself a history. It can't help that, of course. But there it is. And as a consequence of the far-flung activities of a great buccaneering race (which has completely died out) this small and inoffensive people has overpopulated the rather undesirable islands in which it dwells, and possesses about a quarter of the world. It's shamefaced and apologetic *Gemot* at Westminster actually *rules* (willy nilly) over billions of black, yellow, red, and coffee-coloured 'subjects'!

ENGLAND AND SCANDINAVIA

Here is a quandary, plainly, of the most hair-raising description! It is as if Denmark, or Norway, were suddenly made a present of Russia, Africa, and Japan!

It is to this unkind prank of fate that a great deal of the *duality*, to which I have just referred, is due. For as long as possible the British Government behaves as if it were the Storting or Rigsdag. *For as long as ever it can.* It blissfully forgets the 'great open spaces'. The sub-continent of Australia does not exist for it. South Africa is a dream — a dream of a buccaneer called Cecil Rhodes. That gigantic slice of the earth named Canada is forgotten. (Crowds of modern Englishmen were shipped to it after the War as emigrants, but they soon came back, its great spaces were *too* open.) The seething millions of India go on seething. The only people who get anything out of all this 'imperial domain' are in any case a handful of international financiers. And as to the West Indies, nine Englishmen out of ten do not even know where they are.

But there always comes a time when this right little, tight little, Government of England *has* to recall all this nightmare of a thing we describe as 'the Empire'. It has *a duty* after all — though exactly *to whom* it owes this dutiful regard it is not very clear to other Englishmen.

And *then* the Government of Great Britain begins behaving in a very peculiar way. Everybody gets very angry with it. They say (these beastly censorious foreigners) that it is contradicting itself and being madly inconsistent. And of course it is.

Here you have, it seems to me, in a nutshell, the logical basis of this duality, which is such an invariable characteristic of British policy. And whatever *else* may come into it (and obviously other causes of duality and

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of duplicity must supervene, in the case of a government so replete with the possibilities of such almost unlimited power for those who are able to exploit it) at bottom, in dealing with British foreign policy, you must always start from the datum set forth in the foregoing analysis.

In other words, Englishmen are not worse humbugs than other people — it is most unjust to say they are. Their middle-class lords and masters — yes, such as Mr. Baldwin — are not greater hypocrites than can be found in abundance elsewhere. They are quite sincere when they say they do not like ruling — ruling, that is, in such a very large way!

Englishmen of 1936 *have* had greatness thrust upon them. They would genuinely like to give all this great big troublesome Empire on which the beastly hot sun never sets away — and have a bit of 'Peace in our time', as they put it: and 'put on' their pipes, and have a quiet spell for a change. But they *can't*. The big financial gentlemen won't let them. And the big financial gentlemen — with a most un-English streak of buccaneering enterprise all too plainly in their composition — pay the piper. So they call the tune — 'Rule Britannia', of course.

And this really diabolically uncomfortable situation *does* make the good honest kindly persons in Whitehall a bit short-tempered at times, and even vicious. Can you wonder?

But I would go further than this. I do not believe that they really want to make a war all over again — with Germany. But they have to. Orders is orders! So there you are! Or at least if they *don't* — if they stand out and refuse — they are most unhappy about it. For they get a good deal bullied for their 'vacillation', and sooner or

MUSSOLINI AND LAVAL DISCUSSION

later they will get fired and they know it. So first they suppose they must, and then they think perhaps they won't, and we all get in a muddle.

§ 3

What did Mussolini and Laval discuss?

It will be obvious at once how the foregoing analysis of the abstract Englishman affects the Theory of the Dress-Rehearsal. But my idea has been that this theory is correct — and indeed is the only possible explanation — if it is superimposed upon this foundation of national *fainéantisme*.

But it is important to watch this English duality at work, and to observe how, fatally, it leads to international friction and misunderstandings — until at last a well-known French journalist, unable to contain himself any longer, bursts forth in a violent access of anglophobia. (I shall presently be recording his convulsions.)

What I have now to say will lay me open to the charge of sensationalism. I hope I shall not leave that impression on your minds: but if so, *tant pis!* For, if there is *a part* of truth, even, in what I shall pass in review, it will have been worth while taking that risk.

What was the first act in what subsequently became the Anglo-Italian drama? Without preliminary consultation with his English chums across the Channel, M. Laval, lately the French Premier, betook himself to Rome at the beginning of 1935. That was how it all began. M. Laval went there in order to plot with Mussolini the encirclement and destruction of Nazi

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Germany. This was very incorrect. I do not mean, of course, *incorrect* to plot the encirclement of Germany — everybody spends their time doing that: I mean not to take Great Britain with him to Italy. To closet himself alone with that rank Italian outsider, as if the Entente Cordiale had never existed, that was what was incorrect. It must have made a painful impression upon the franophiles in our Cabinet.

It is impossible not to speculate (in view of what has transpired since) whether, while they were settling their private affairs, *all* eventualities did not come up for discussion, between these two cold-blooded 'realists'. Mussolini was given a free hand in Abyssinia, yes (the publication of the Confidential Report by the Italian Press, Feb. 1936, proved that); and he agreed to keep an army of occupation on the Brenner Pass, summer and winter, in return, quite! — which would march in, if Austria showed signs of independence. (I mean *independence* in the real sense — not the *Alice in Wonderland* sense of contemporary political jargon — where 'Peace' means War, 'Neutrality' means Intervention, and 'Independence' means Economic Servitude.) Should the well-known desire of 80 per cent of the population of Austria to join forces with the Reich find effective expression, *then* Mussolini would 'defend the independence of Austria', as independence had never been defended before. That was what was compacted between them more or less *openly*.

But the conversations of these two statesmen may not have stopped at that. Why should it? As well as Abyssinia, Palestine may have been discussed, for instance. Other matters, too, may have come up for review. One thing leads to another, does it not? The Mediterranean

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is a big subject. It is a lake full of striking diplomatic possibilities. It has three exits of world-shaking importance. I said Palestine first because recently we have heard so much about Italian intrigue in Palestine, with both Arab and Jew. But there is really no knowing what dreams may not have been caressed — mainly of course by the hallucinated Blackshirt Emperor, but with the encouragement, more or less, of his new-found French friend from the Auvergne.

For after the downfall of Hitler, what then? *You* may never have considered what Europe would look like minus that controversial personage, but all the statesmen of Europe have. They have devoted much anxious thought to it. All would at once be in the melting-pot, of course. There would at once be *other* convulsions. After the Hitlerian Empire, the British Empire would be the next on the list, as I have suggested at an earlier stage of this inquiry. 'What a city to sack!' exclaimed Blücher, as he looked down upon London. And *what a* bumper swag is that Empire on which the sun never sets! The British Empire, as it exists to-day, would not long survive the final extinction of German power — in which what was left of Germany, probably cut up into small states, had reverted to its former communistish condition, only more so: we need make no mistake about that.

Historically, the Mediterranean is a Latin sea. The Italians are its natural masters, geographically — France is really a northern power. It can, I suppose, be accepted as a commonplace that the grip of the British lion on India is not what it was. It is a rather apologetic Raj that Mr. Baldwin haltingly and surreptitiously, continues to hold for us — while looking the other way, and affecting

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not to know that it is still there, with its ugly machine guns and R.A.F. units.

But Egypt is the key to India. And the Mufti of Jerusalem, Haj Amin Effendi el Husseini, is the ally of the Wafd (the Egyptian nationalist organization, unfriendly to England, which has been responsible for all the trouble in Cairo of late); and el Husseini has been flirting furiously, we are told, with Benito, as have the Jews of the Revisionist party.

It really does not require much imagination, in such an unsettled, fluid, time as the present — which at any moment may be split to its foundations, by another European war — it does not require a great deal of imagination to see the sort of perspectives down which the restless eyes of the French and Italian statesmen may have cast a significant glance or two, I think.

Should Hitler be trapped into some rash action and the dogs of war be loosed, from one month to the next all the present groupings of the continental powers would be completely obsolete, following upon his fall. It would be absurd to suppose that these contingencies are left out of account; especially when a couple of not exactly squeamishly scrupulous statesmen are concerting to bring that particular situation about. After their *coup*, there should be far more booty to be picked up than is to be found between the Rhine and the Oder.

EUROPE GONE 'CRIME CLUB'

§ 4

Contemporary Europe gone 'Crime Club'

I think that in England the present temper of continental Europe is very little understood. How like a shilling shocker continental politics have become, full of the most improbable Secret Service gentlemen, sleekly embarked upon the most ruffianly missions, is not realized by the English. The reason for this is not far to seek. Each nation is to-day turned inward upon itself, 'economic nationalism' acts in precisely the same way as a blockade, foreign travel has been discouraged with remarkable efficiency. So the famous 'insularity' of the English has been accentuated. Then for so long a time the Englishman has enjoyed a sheltered, and somewhat privileged, life: and his well-policed placidity is relatively intact. It is difficult for him, accordingly, to picture to himself the sort of violent and disreputable slum that Europe is rapidly becoming, where the poor countries, screwed down within their frontiers, grow poorer every day. 'The balkanization of Europe', as it has been called, has proceeded without the 'Britisher' being aware of the fact; if indeed he would understand what 'balkanization' implied, having been — so far — personally spared the experience.

The France of Stavisky; the homeland of Capone in the grip of a *Machtpolitik*; the martial-law conditions obtaining in Germany; not to mention Communist Russia, hermetically sealed down upon its wretched inhabitants, and ruled by a permanent terrorist élite (for its own good, that is understood): this is a somewhat different Europe to what was there in 1914. The change that has come over England is mild in comparison. And the English-

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man is apt to react to news of events on the continent as if the old landmarks were still there. The caricaturist still depicts the 'Russian' as a booted and bearded moujik out of a *ballet russe*, whereas of course a Hatton Garden merchant or a Hollywood film-magnate would be nearer the mark. And Escoffier no longer symbolizes France, where there is scarcely a good cook left, people living on tinned food and watered-down wine from Algiers.

So the general reader *must*, there is no alternative, consider me as possessed of a very lurid mind when I say that, in this period when war of some sort seems a foregone conclusion, we should not rule out our attractive neighbour, France, as a possible competitor for the honour of crossing swords with us, or swopping bombs. Heaven avert the omen! But the disquieting signs multiply, all pointing to the conclusion that *nothing* should be taken for granted in international relations, just at present.

Consider how at every fresh turn of events — at every 'crisis' — the French Press now lashes itself into a fury with Great Britain. What is written is full not only of insults, but of menaces. The disturbance always ends by the British Government giving way. But the France of Herriot, Blum, and Cachin is not *grateful* — only sneeringly appeased. Consider the attitude of M. Flandin, and the Press at his back, when England was held up at the revolver-point regarding the German occupation of the Rhine. Under a threat of war our Government capitulated. But if they had not? What if one day they should stand their ground?

No, there may be a new 'entente', but it will hardly be 'cordial'. There may be an alliance: but the English will not be free and equal partners. No love will be lost

‘BRITONS SHALL BE SLAVES!’

between these possible partners in a murderous war: and their friendship, such as it was, would not survive the new Peace a twelvemonth.

At the height of the Anglo-Italian broil Mr. Bertrand Russell wrote that when passing through Paris he was astonished to find how ‘unpopular the English were’. Of course they were not and are not popular! Why on earth should they be? Those who have great possessions, and well-creased trousers, seldom are. And they ought not, in their own interest, to allow the civility or even servility they encounter in many quarters to mask from them the true position.

Paris, *October 13th*, 1935

‘Hundreds of police and mobile guards, the latter carrying rifles, were stationed in the Faubourg St. Honoré for several hours last night to protect the British Embassy . . . The mere fact that this had to be done should provide some food for reflection to many a Frenchman, before the pro-Italian propaganda of the French Press and the open or implied attacks on Britain and the League go much farther.’¹

This in retrospect should provide some food for reflection for Englishmen, as well, surely. For what has happened once may happen again.

§ 5

‘Britons SHALL be slaves!’

On October 12th, 1935, the British ambassador in Paris went to wait upon M. Laval to complain of a particularly violent attack on England in a Paris newspaper

¹ *Manchester Guardian*

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with a circulation of 500,000 copies. The article in question occupied the whole of the front page, and was headed with this cheerful little question, 'Ought Great Britain to be reduced to a servile condition?' Here are a few striking passages, in very rough translation, from this newspaper article; this hymn of gallic hate for all things English. And this was 'only yesterday'.

First of all, the arrival of 'eight hundred thousand tons' of British naval armament in the Mediterranean is discussed.

'One can imagine how, to start with, at the spectacle of this unlooked-for regatta, Mussolini could scarcely believe his eyes. Although, doubtless, he believed still less his ears — when a suave voice reached him, emanating from Downing Street . . . insinuating that he would be well advised to regard himself as on a level with the Negus. Suddenly the Duce lost patience: "What is this!" he exclaimed. "What! You propose to put Italy on a par with a negro nation!"

'Alas! This great Italian, who understands so many things, has he never learnt that for any self-respecting Englishman, for every "*insulaire de bon ton*", in a word for every true English Gentleman, the world of niggers commences at Calais?'

(This first quotation is typical of the ingenuous quality of M. Henri Béraud's attack. The sort of 'English Gentleman' he has in mind lived in the days of Du Maurier — he was the 'milord' of the *Grand Tour*. What we have cause to complain about in our more conspicuous 'milords' of the year 1935 is on the contrary that they are apt to consider that the coolie world commences at *Dover* (not Calais) and are disposed to give more consideration to the men of every nation except

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their own, treating the latter as if they were not only of an inferior race, but of peculiarly abject intelligence. However.)

Our left-wing countrymen are in great part responsible for this outburst on the part of M. Béraud. Any French newspaper supporting the Italian case during the weeks preceding this *Gringoire* attack (of Oct. 11th, 1935) was referred to by the *Manchester Guardian* and others as ‘hirelings of Mussolini’, and other such disobliging things. And you cannot go on calling a Frenchman names week after week without his, at last, retaliating. This will explain M. Béraud’s remark in the following passage about France being ‘*vendue à Mussolini*’.

‘If one refers to the past, one notices that, from the reign of Charles VII to that of Charles X, many Frenchmen have professed, on the subject of England, opinions no less disrespectful, no less suspect’ (than those of Pierre Larousse, whose ‘disrespectful’ words, M. Béraud has just quoted). ‘When we consider that a Jeanne d’Arc, a Crillon, a Richelieu, a Jean Bart, a Robespierre, a Napoléon has been seen to assert that at all times the Englishman has proved himself the enemy at once of France and of Europe, one can but ask oneself whether France has not *always* been in the pay of Mussolini! Really, our history gives us cause to blush! Because, decidedly, what these eminent French people have said and done seems to point to the fact that *never*, at any period, has there been, on the part of our people, the sympathy that *should* have existed for our English neighbours!’

‘It is, alas! but too true that at all times our people, the France of work and of battle (as distinct from the

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politicians' "France") has been of opinion that England had no other intention than to diminish and weaken us. . . . Everything shows that the People of France have got that firmly planted in their heads and that nothing will persuade them to alter their opinion. Absolutely nothing! All the same, one does one's best to convince them to the contrary. One tells them, for instance, that John Bull rendered them a great service when, in 1914, he came and joined them in the trenches of Flanders. The ungrateful Jacques Bonhomme . . . agrees that the English fought with him, yes. But it is by no means certain that they fought *for* him!

' . . . But above all, there is *the time since then* that we have to consider. For us, Frenchmen, there is most particularly the time *since*.'

(And at this point M. Béraud launches into a catalogue of English misdeeds since the end of the War, culminating in the naval agreement with Germany.)

The article terminates as follows.

'I am among those who regard English friendship as the cruellest gift that the gods can bestow upon any people. When I observe Great Britain, the Bible in one hand and the Covenant of the League in the other, plead the cause of the weak, or invoke the sacred principles of international justice, I cannot forbear to believe that her personal interest is at stake. I believe, further, that that interest — always the same, deriving from an invariable policy — is as old and solid as the throne of Edward the Confessor. It consists, this policy, in throwing the continent into confusion, so that England may reign over the ocean wave. It consists in buying the conscience of others, in seeking mercenaries, in sowing discord. It consists in interdicting peace among the nations. It

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consists in sticking up clergymen on top of chests of bullion, that they may preach self-abnegation to nations living in poverty. Because *that* is in fact the price of British prosperity!

‘Do not the friends of England inform us that the control of the Red Sea is *indispensable* to British policy, on account of the sea-route to India? Well, that may be so! But one cannot help asking whether it is *indispensable* to the happiness of mankind that the sea-route to India should be a British highway. One asks oneself whether the peace of mind of the universe requires that, on all the high seas, a numberless mercantile marine should be found transporting, equally, the pretty toys of Messrs. Vickers and Co., and the pretty gentlemen of the English Secret Service, along with the yapping cargoes of big-footed English “ladies” and the uninteresting products of the University of Oxford. One would like to know, finally, if it is really necessary that the peasants of the continent of Europe should massacre each other up to the end of time, in order that the countrymen of John Lackland should spread upon their bread the moist freshly perfumed butter of the fairest pastures!

‘I speak as a traveller in many lands. I speak of what I have seen with my own eyes. I have witnessed the tears of the widows of Athenian politicians, to whom the hypocritical English had promised favours which they had in their giving. I have seen the police of his Britannic Majesty sabring Egyptian students in the streets of Cairo. I have witnessed the death agonies of the Lord Mayor of Cork in a felon’s cell in London. I have seen convicts disguised as soldiers, by the ingenious Mr. Lloyd George, machine-gunning on the threshold of their cottages the martyrs of Balbriggan. . . . Ten years of my life, I have

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moved about the world, only to be the disgusted witness of massacres ordered by the Foreign Office — or to assist everywhere at the spectacle of the imperturbable John Bull, busily completing — by the intermediary of his spies and money-changers — the work of the fields of battle, at the expense of the impoverished populations of Europe.

‘... I say and I repeat that it is necessary to reduce England to a condition of servitude. ... I make these statements in all seriousness. Just as seriously as Jonathan Swift — the favourite author of their children in the nursery — when he proposed that England should make use of Irishmen for butcher’s meat. I say and I believe that there will come a day when the rest of the world will have the strength and wisdom to enslave, in its turn, this tyrant, reputed to be invincible.

‘And why not? The reason for the invincibility of Britain, we all know what that is. Seeing the centuries during which Great Britain has organized, to her own profit, coalitions, would it not be an act of poetic justice if finally she perished at the hands of a coalition? “You will perish like the proud Republic of Venice!” *He* hurled at them from St. Helena — yes *He*, who, dying upon that terrible rock, left as a legacy “the horror and opprobrium of his death to the reigning family of England”!’

This diatribe of M. Béraud’s reminds me of nothing so much as of the ‘Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion’. The British hegemony here takes the place, for the occasion, of the Jewish hegemony, that is all. But with what a tragic feebleness alas! does the British world-idea (in the posture in which we find it to-day) lend itself

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to this grandiose and flattering interpretation! When we place, in our mind's-eye, this *furibond* French canvas of an implacable, insidious, financially supreme, crafty and mischief-making, world-embracing Power, side-by-side with the not very rosy reality of the impoverished English society we know to-day, we are amazed at the illusions which this ‘much travelled man’ has been able to retain. What a fortunate temperament! *All* his geese must be swans, one feels, if the poor British goose cuts such an imposing figure!

But is it not pitiable, all the same, that we should have arrived at this pass, eighteen years after our war-to-end-war? The French and the English have the two most considerable colonial empires in the world. Neither of these empires can to-day be regarded as a ‘good life’, from the insurance company standpoint. Both are governed by old and enfeebled democracies — clouded by self-doubt, threatened by their respective ‘left wings’, shaken by internal dissension, and with vast pauper populations no better off than the coolies of their ‘native’ dominions. Yet these two precariously-situated old bankrupts have got to the stage of shaking their fists at each other across the English Channel, and mumbling imprecations about Joan of Arc, Agincourt, and Edward the Confessor — like aged men who dwell entirely in the past, hugging old rancours, incapable of understanding the present time.

Does dear M. Béraud really look upon the present socialo-tory government of Great Britain as a powerful and ‘ruthless’ oligarchy, such as directed the destinies of the Venetian Republic or Carthage? Does he consider that Englishmen (cf. Poy's *Little Man*) are to be called any longer ‘one of our conquerors’ in anything but

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derision even by the most backward of bog-trotters? Does he suppose that England is at present anything more than a convenient headquarters of international loan-capital? And does this mediocrally-minded polemist not realize that in a few months or weeks, as a result of another world-war, this island-kingdom would be very likely to find itself no longer an 'empire' at all — though still, as Mr. Churchill said, inhabited by the inflated population of a first-class power — and quite deserted by those great financial overlords, who alone give it a fictitious and indeed highly undesirable importance?

And if at the moment our arbitrary rulers are annoying the true France (*le pays réel*) of M. Béraud (not the false France of M. Blum) cannot he see that they may be annoying *us* too? Does he really think, is his intelligence so turbid and ill-informed as to believe that these internationalist governments, of ours and of his, have any organic connection with the interests or the desires of the people who suffer their domination?

§ 6

The scramble for power which would follow the downfall of Britain

In a book in which a great deal of sound political doctrine is to be found (*England*, by Douglas Jerrold), the possible overthrow of our Empire is referred to in the following passage:

THE SCRAMBLE FOR POWER

‘Our imperial responsibilities alone involve the destinies of over 400,000,000 people in Asia, Africa, and the West Indies, surely a sufficient field for the energies at least of this generation, especially as we may expect grave and forcible threats from other powers to our rule, not only in India, but throughout Asia, and, perhaps, in Northern and Equatorial Africa. One clear prophecy can be made. If we ever yielded to such threats the collapse of western civilization in the resulting scramble for power would be inevitable and final. The structure could no more be rebuilt than that of the Roman Empire of the west when the capital was removed to Constantinople, and Europe, for the second time, would have to face centuries of chaos.’

The scramble for power which would follow the break-up (probably a sudden break-up) of the British Empire would be a fantastic spectacle. Nothing like that has ever been witnessed in history. The Englishman should not *go to sleep* on his empire! He should make a big effort to grasp the immensity of the power and potential wealth he is sitting on. Because *he* gets nothing much out of being the child of empire-builders, that is not to say the other people will let him squat there for ever. If he does not want to be suddenly blasted off it, he should do one of two things: he should either remove himself quickly, or else put himself in a state of proper defence. It is a great nuisance, but there is no middle course, if he values his own skin (it is unnecessary to hazard the assumption that he cares what happens to his grandchildren — why should he?) But he cannot just stop as he is and *not* come to grief. And the gentlemen who are watching him lounging on his huge inheritance don't say much, but they are *in a hurry*. That is what all this

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hustle at Geneva means. It's not little Mr. Anthony Eden who's doing it — don't run away with that idea!

But the French Empire, and France itself, would go to pieces at the same time, if the British Empire went. It would be the 'young' and vigorous countries that would benefit, if anyone benefited, which is extremely improbable. (Certain groups of people would benefit, but no nation would.) If, on the other hand, Great Britain goes crusading against half the world to make the world safe for communism, Great Britain will lose her empire, it is more than likely. Once the British Fleet was badly mauled by some heavily-armed power, and reduced greatly below its present strength, that would be the signal for the universal onset.

'Here is your chance. You may defend Russia by defending Abyssinia,' said Sir Walter Citrine to the T.U.C. Congress. And the graceful clubman who was, and still is, the plenipotentiary of Great Britain at Geneva — and who, in face of the hostility or scepticism of half the world, has been defending Abyssinia with such startling zeal — might quite well be carrying out the orders of the Third International, so nearly do the policies he represents correspond with the policies of communism. But whether you thrill at the sight of the Union Jack floating over Tasmania, Quebec, Gibraltar, and Malta, or whether the 'Empire' is about the most boring abstraction of which you know, simply as a matter of fact and general interest that great fat political picking is what is being risked on the tables of the international casino in Switzerland: and it would be a pretty disturbing crash if, at the end of a rapid series of sensational happenings, it changed hands. If you asked me for my private opinion, I think it would be best for the

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English people to make up their minds to defend it — not because an empire appeals to me very much, but because we shall all be so much worse off if we don't.

§ 7

An increasingly Anglophobic world

What you have been reading just now from the fiery pen of M. Béraud, although pretty hot stuff, is not by any means the ravings of an isolated anglophobe. Many of the most important papers published in the French capital have, for a long time now, betrayed great irritation against England. M. Béraud's diatribe is merely the 'peak' of a very widespread hostility.

Actually what M. Béraud says is only what a great many Frenchmen feel, in their *fort intérieur*, about this country: with less intensity, no doubt, but upon those lines. It is most important not to exaggerate this: but it would be stupid to ignore it.

The 'Englishman Abroad' always *feels* far more popular than he in fact *is*. His very assumption that he *must* be popular with the foreigner, and that in his simple, confident, way he is rather nice to know, has been in the past a source of exasperation to the latter (who naturally, on his side, believes that *he* — although not so attractively shy and sparing of his speech — is, in his way, a rather fascinating fellow as well, and of some slight importance).

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And (not to beat about the bush) it is no more 'un-thinkable' that one fine day the French should show their teeth — if, for instance, England were to make *too many* naval pacts with rather unsuitable people — than that any other nation should get ugly. It should be the business of the people who run England to bear this in mind; and it would be ungentlemanly but worth risking to ask how it comes about that the French have twice as many submarines, or something near it, as the supreme sea-power, Great Britain: and to find out whether M. Piétri was correct the other day in boasting that the French destroyer flotillas were the best in the world: and to consider if it was suitable that the losers of the *partie* at Fashoda should have three times as many warplanes — or is it six? — as the present masters of Egypt. All this without any ill feeling. Scarcely a day passes but one of our ministers or ecclesiastics refers to the war that may occur at any moment between the Germans and the English, and we are still on footballing terms (in spite of our left-wing) with Germany.

The fact is that *no* country is safe (since 'security' is the order of the day) when it is the possessor of such a big fat empire to pick as England has — and when you employ such overbearing plenipotentiaries as sometimes England does; at once so overbearing and so easily cajoled or bullied.

A substantial part of the British Press was for months full of exultant statements to the effect that world-opinion was in full cry against Italy. What it did not insist upon so much was the very widespread criticism of England that the autumn's proceedings at Geneva aroused. That, too, was world-wide.

From Poland, Hungary, Austria, the Argentine, Spain,

INCREASINGLY ANGLOPHOBIC WORLD

Belgium, came 'hostile' and 'unfriendly' criticism of the League, to the effect that this *soi-disant* democratic instrument was in England's pocket and that it only functioned when the Great Powers (England and France) wanted it to, and invariably in their interests, under their dictation, not in the interests of the remaining fifty-odd negligible countries which compose it, and whose representatives are supposed to scuttle off to Geneva whenever they are summoned to form a docile chorus of Yes-men. 'General Gombös,' for instance, we read at the time of the imposition of sanctions, 'considered that sanctions would prove a grave disservice to peace and he hoped that in future the League would not operate "simply in the interest of one group of Powers".' (Reuter.)

It was not, in fine, only Italy, the protagonist of the revolt against the League, that said that Great Britain had got a mandate over the League of Nations and behaved in Geneva as a mandatory Power, administering the fifty-odd colonies who send up their official robots to be parcelled out into 'committees', to be marshalled behind this issue, or that, according to the good pleasure of the gentlemen with the big stick, representing the 'City', or else the Comité des Forges and the great Paris finance-houses. There were others besides Italy who expressed themselves in this unsuitable way, and the redoubtable split in the 'Stresa Front' — the triple alliance of England, France, and Italy — brought all that disobliging criticism to a head. For it really makes life too difficult by far when the Big Three begin violently squabbling among themselves!

There has been just as much criticism of England, then, as there has been criticism of Italy. In stirring up the latter criticism Mr. Eden was automatically precipitating

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the former. This was not because the critics were particularly 'pro-Italian', or felt any sympathy for the Duce's imperialist fury. Nobody likes *other people's* imperialism. It was just because there were everywhere a great number of people who thought that way about the oppressive authority exercised through the League of Nations by the big Imperialist Powers. They comprised the disaffected majority. This was an ideal opportunity for expressing their disapprobation of despotic methods, through the medium of the Press.

§ 8

The great fissure that has appeared in European society in our time

Then the great central fact of contemporary European life played its part — namely the portentous fissure that has appeared in society in our time, separating all that can, directly or indirectly, be grouped under the term 'fascist', from the internationalism the extreme expression of which is to be found at Moscow. Great Britain, in the capacity of the arch-internationalist, was the target for the invective of every nationalist.

The word 'fascist' is greatly misused. It is, of course, used *à tort et à travers* by the gentlemen of the 'left'. For if that pleasant old French liberal *le père* Doumergue, can be called (and he always was) a 'fascist', then certainly Mr. Eden, with equal justification, could be described as a '*moscoutaire*', or a Moscow man. Which, of

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course, would be absurd (although Mr. Randolph Churchill mentioned in the period immediately preceding the election, a rumour that Mr. Eden was joining the Socialist Party).

But the present action of His Majesty's Government at Geneva has willy nilly, and whether that situation was foreseen or not, ranged it upon that side of this deep fissure which divides our society where Moscow stands. There is the might of Great Britain confronting all that is *not* Moscow. And as 'fascist' is really a rather meaningless tag where seventy-five per cent of what is just *not Moscow* is concerned, the matter is not improved, from the standpoint of His Majesty's Government. For it finds itself aligned, *not* against 'fascism' — that would be unwise, but a not incomprehensible position: it finds itself aligned instead against all that is *not Moscow*. And that is very unsatisfactory. It includes too great a volume of hostility, from Japanese imperialism to Afrikaner nationalism.

It was in consequence of this that the British Government found itself in the opposite camp to M. Laval, for instance, who is very far removed from anything that could be described as 'fascist'. And its rather strained relations with the great South American republics, especially the Argentine, may be traced to the same emotional, unrealistic, sources.

But if *everything* and *everybody* upon the side of this fundamental fissure in the political world of 1936 which is *not Moscow* must be called 'fascist', then it does follow that everything and everybody upon the *other* side should logically come under the heading 'Moscow'. (Or *For Moscow*, at least.) And His Majesty's Government at this moment is the biggest noise upon that side of the

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argument, the Moscow side. So His Majesty's Government has raised up a pretty considerable volume of criticism against itself all over the world, and England has naturally suffered. For no one, 'fascist' or otherwise, much likes the rich man who, out of self-interest, or as a rich man's sensational amusement, consorts with the hold-up man.

'Uniting or splitting Europe?' was the question-mark caption of the leader in a weekly paper, *Great Britain and the East*. I will quote a few lines — it is from an issue dating from the early days of the Abyssinian campaign. They will show how the inner truth of the present situation is timidly finding its way out into the light — at least in the clubs and hotel-lounges of the Levant, where I suppose that periodical mainly circulates.

'But philosophic doubt,' said the article, 'cannot be confined to Anglo-French matters . . . There is a wider, more ominous shadow, which people in this country may not fully realize, but which is weighing heavily with continental statesmen. This consists of nothing less than the possibility, should the war in Ethiopia endure for any considerable time, and should the accompanying economic sanctions endure for approximately the same length of time, that the particular issue between Italy and the League might be converted into a general issue between Fascism and its variations, and the Second or Third International and *its* variations.'

But, according to this classification, His Majesty's Government comes under the heading of one of 'the variations' of the Third International! Is not this a first-class political paradox? Who would have expected to find a British Ministry, overwhelmingly 'tory' in complexion, inviting such a classification?

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'Such a conversion,' the article in question goes on, 'would be disastrous, possibly catastrophic.' But there will be no such 'conversion', into that 'general issue', of course; for that conversion *has already* been effected some time since. The entire press of the world is sufficient proof of it. The issue is *already* joined! Whether the result will be 'catastrophic', or merely 'disastrous', will depend a good deal on luck. It will depend upon things that are incalculable. Whether Moscow is the best bet, or whether all that is *not* Moscow, who can say offhand? 'Mr. Baldwin is always wrong,' it is said. (I quote Lord Castlerosse, mouthpiecing for Lord Beaverbrook, who has followed Mr. Baldwin's career very closely.) Baldwin may have put his money — I mean our money — on the right horse, or he may not. But it would be interesting to know from whom he derived the sanction — in what is still called a 'democracy' — to go betting with this sizable empire on which the sun never sets in his pocket! Parliament would be called together we were assured if any fatal decisions were to be taken by the executive. But it has seemed to most of us that such decisions *have* been taken long ago — far, oh very far, over the heads of the long-suffering people.

By the time this book is published we may be at war with Italy — or with Germany, or Japan, or Turkey or Chile, or all of them together, with Mexico, Egypt Afghanistan and China thrown in: Mussolini may have died of sleeping sickness in Somaliland, or have contracted a mortal chill on the Brenner Pass: France and Russia may have attacked England for not agreeing to attack Germany: or everybody may have temporarily made peace all round, the better to plot new wars, who can say? But that will not really alter what is funda-

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mentally England's position on this chessboard, over against those hostile forces, with which any government in England that is likely to be there will certainly have to reckon. What is being said and done to-day and what has been said and done for the last twelvemonth, cannot be taken back. As the newspapers in Italy say, Italy will never forget the present interference of England. And in other countries, too, a public opinion is being formed in a sense unfavourable to England.

§ 9

Records from the Foreign Press

From day to day, for the best part of a year now, the Press of the whole world has been recording these changed sentiments regarding our country. A new habit is being contracted. But it will not be amiss here to select some cuttings from such newspaper-files as I have kept by me, witnessing to the extent of this anti-British feeling in the weeks preceding the General Election. Here are a few items from a page in the *Daily Express* — a column headed 'Britain through foreign eyes'. And the newspaper prefaces its quotations with the matter-of-fact remark that 'Generally world Press attacks on Britain (yesterday) were considerably more moderate'.

'AUSTRIA:

'Mr. Eden attacked.

'The *Oesterreichische Abend Zeitung*, organ of the Vienna Heimwehr, says: "If events followed the wishes of Eden and the British Government, Mussolini would lay down his arms before the British general election, thus affording the Conservative Party unparalleled election propaganda."'

RECORDS FROM THE FOREIGN PRESS

'BELGIUM

'Britain! Britain! Britain! British policy is still criticized in Belgium. The *Gazette* (independent) invites Europe not to follow Mr. Eden's "orders" for sanctions against Italy. It says:

'At Geneva one hears only — Great Britain wants this, Great Britain wants that. Great Britain, always Great Britain. Poor League of Nations! We thought the League was the highest expression of progress, morality and civilization. All it can do is to wait and obey Mr. Eden!'

'SPAIN:

'England, Beware!

'*La Nacion* says: "There is no doubt that the Italian operations in Abyssinia are purely colonial, like similar operations by France and Spain in Morocco, and by England all over the world.

' "If England persists in an anti-Italian policy, she alone will be responsible for a conflagration throughout Europe. She should remember that she has done many times what Italy is now attempting. Gibraltar is a good example.

' "The fall of Fascism would be followed by the spread of Communism throughout the whole of Europe." '

The *Daily Telegraph* published on October 19th the following information from its Berlin correspondent:

'Berlin, Friday.

'Decreasing sympathy in many countries for Britain's stand in the Italo-Abyssinian dispute is noted by the *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* to-day: . . .

'World-opinion, which a week ago was ranged unanimously behind Britain, is now changing.'

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The state of affairs at the end of October, 1935, in the two most important South American republics may be gauged from the following news items — the first from *The Times* (October 19th), the second from the *Daily Express* (October 16th).

‘ATTEMPT TO BOYCOTT BRITISH BANKS

‘ITALIAN POSTERS IN BRAZIL

‘Sao Paulo. October 18th.

‘The Italian colony in Sao Paulo, one of the greatest outside Italy, is invited by posters affixed to the walls at street corners of the city to withdraw accounts from and not to have dealings with British banks.’

‘Buenos Aires. October 18th. — The Government have sent to the Public Prosecutor for action an article in the *Mattino d’Italia*, the organ of the Italian Fascists here. The article describes Señor Ruiz Guinazu, the Argentine representative at Geneva and President of the League Council as an imbecile for aligning Argentina with the other Powers in regard to sanctions. — Reuter.’

‘ “DOWN WITH THE BRITISH”

‘Shout Argentine Demonstrators

‘Buenos Aires. Tuesday

‘Two million Argentinians who have descended from Italians have formed themselves into a Fascist organization and declared “war” on England.

‘An anti-British demonstration was staged on the Buenos Aires quayside to-day when volunteers for Mussolini’s army sailed for Italy.

‘ “Down with the perfidious British,” a large crowd screamed as their comrades left.

‘The stay-at-home supporters of Mussolini’s campaign

RECORDS FROM THE FOREIGN PRESS

... aim at boycotting all British firms and products in the Argentine.

‘It is claimed that nearly a million Argentinians have signed a boycott pledge and drawn up a “black list” of British firms.’

Such ebullitions of hostile public opinion increased in intensity, and then died down. But the main issue, as educed, however imperfectly, in these hasty pages, will still be confronting the people of this country, as much twelve months hence as to-day. For Great Britain has been too deeply involved to be able to withdraw into isolation, ‘splendid’ or otherwise.

What is this issue, into the centre of which the British politicians plunged with such an unmistakable bias? It is the issue expressed in the ancient opposition of (1) the political theory of centralized government: and (2) that of decentralized government. That is the dispute in which England is immersed up to the neck.

The Baldwin administration has plumped (and *plumped* is indeed the word) too heavily for centralization at Geneva, or for ‘collective’ action of some sort, to be able now to turn back, even if it wished. It is committed to some sort of indeterminate, universal, ‘indivisible’, interference. And should a socialist administration succeed it, they would merely intensify the process of internationalization: the march towards the super-state. Those of us, of whatever party, who mistrust inter-

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nationalism, are between the devil and the deep sea. It is a choice of 'Internationals' — numbers One, Two, Three, or Four: or maybe the 'International'.

Mr. Herbert Morrison, speaking at Carlisle on October 18th, 1935, made the following observations: 'It is already known,' he said, 'that two groups of Conservative M.P.s who are as strongly anti-League of Nations as the Government itself was a few months ago, have expressed their dissent from the present policy of the Government, whilst Mr. Garvin has made it perfectly clear that conspiracies are on foot to get rid of Mr. Anthony Eden because his foreign policy is too similar to that of the Labour Party.'

Mr. Morrison, as you will observe, accepts Mr. Eden's internationalist *bona fide*. Mr. Anthony Eden is a sound man, from Mr. Morrison's standpoint (or was at that time) — a much stouter fellow than Sir Samuel Hoare. And Mr. Eden is the creation of Mr. Baldwin. It really all comes back to poor Mr. Baldwin in the end. 'It may well be,' Mr. Morrison says, 'that a number of Ministers, including that arch-militarist and reactionary Mr. Neville Chamberlain, really agree with Mr. Amery and his friends'; and so were hostile to that very broadminded and soundly internationalist Minister, Mr. Eden, and (to that extent) to the man behind him, none other than the Prime Minister.

But what is even more serious is that Mr. Baldwin himself is not internationalist enough, and is regarded as far too hesitating and slow in his internationalization of British policy, for many people who have the power to put him out. At any moment Mr. Baldwin may disappear from the scene: and there are far worse people, as I have said, than Mr. Baldwin.

PART THREE

CHAPTER I

THE RELIGIOUS FACTOR. THE CHURCHES AND THE LEFT WING

§ I

*Do not blame Great Britain, but the Internationalism for which
the British Government speaks*

WE have now exposed the various nerve-centres, as it were, of the argument of this essay, and we must examine them in a little more detail.

First, it has not been a national voice, but an international voice, that has been heard at Geneva. England throughout this crisis, or chain of crises, has been speaking in the name of Internationalism — speaking with confident and unabashed authority. A far more comprehensive issue was *supposed* to be involved, in Great Britain's dispute with Italy, than that inhering in a mere 'imperialist' issue. It has been claimed that that issue was of a semi-religious order. And so it was.

The 'religion' in question was 'caesar-worship', as it is called, namely *nationalism*, upon the one side; and a militant humanitarian revivalism on the other.

The lofty impatience of our Mr. Eden in face of the violent protests raised by the astonished Italians, is in that way explained. It was due, unquestionably, to Mr. Eden's appreciation of the *international* — not at all of the national — statue that was his. (Merely as the spokesman of poor old Great Britain he would have adopted a much

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more circumspect tone.) Consequently, it is not Great Britain who should be blamed for Mr. Eden, but the international order.

All along, it was as though our envoy to Geneva was saying to that stupid roughneck in Rome, that little penniless Caesar (surrounded in spirit, as this *soi-disant* British statesman spoke, by the frowning overlords of High Finance):

'What you are doing is just as out of date (out of date because *we* are Time, seeing that we are Money!) as the muskets used by Clive or Wolfe! Look! Colonies to-day are a *word* merely! You should understand that, seeing you are told often enough by the Austrians that Austria is *your* 'colony'. Even if you succeeded in seizing Ethiopia, you haven't got the *money* to exploit it. You will have to come to our Banks to get it, in London or Paris. Money, my good man, is all that counts. It would not be *your* colony, in any sense that matters, any more than the street he patrols belongs to a police constable — any more, for that matter, than Great Britain's colonies *belong* to Great Britain (the people stagnating in the island from which I hail I mean) in anything but name. You are being absurd! You are behaving like some vulgar outlaw — we shall have to send out G. Men to get you, you know, if you go on like this, we really shall! We have told you that we don't like what you are doing. Why don't you stop? We are willing to tolerate you so long as you behave yourself and do your duty on the Brenner Pass. Your function in Europe is to down your fellow dictator, Herr H. That's all the use we've got for you, to be frank. But we're not going to have you pretending to be an empire-builder! It doesn't suit our book. Then look at the *money* you're spending, too! It's monstrous!

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All *that* could be done, if we wanted to do it, without firing a shot. Mr. Rickett, of Kein-Löeb & Co, has the right idea. You are just living in another time, when brute-force *did* count for something. Well, I'm telling you! You won't be allowed to get away with it! You know to what people I am accredited? I needn't show you my five-pointed sheriff's star, I suppose! Well, take it from me, old boy, there's *nothing doing*! I'll give you a week to think it over!

Many people have described to us in the Press the manner in which the business of the League diplomacy at Geneva is conducted in hotel sitting-rooms and restaurants: and the above imaginary exordium is probably not so very far away from the spirit, at least, of many a genevan chat, when our envoys were attempting to bring Mussolini to heel: although, for public consumption, to the accompaniment of the salvationist bray of the socialist accordion, words of edification were of course the order of the day.

The 'Common front' of Internationalism, organized for emergency, has shown its head, has revealed its true face, as never before, in the Press and Platform campaign against Italy. It has been a golden opportunity for all those among us who wished to have their doubts and perplexities set at rest. Such an opportunity will never occur again. In dealing with 'fascism' nearer home all these militants will have to be much more circumspect, as German-baiting spells full-scale war for the Englishman, whereas Italian-baiting seemed to him merely a pastime of the Mediterranean Fleet.

Nobody henceforth, anyway, can excuse himself for an obtuseness where these great issues are concerned. They have been paraded before us — with consummate

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effrontery, as it seems to me. They have been as explicitly and pedantically *demonstrated* to us, after the manner of a theorem chalked up on a blackboard. I have, within the measure of the means at my disposal, verbally photographed them in certain sections of this book.

§ 2

The Three Acts in the great Hitler Drama

In my account of the Theory of the Dress-Rehearsal I acknowledged my indebtedness to the piece of political gossip which described Mr. Eden as pessimistic regarding the response of England to purely political stimulus. Only *via* moral uplift (such as is provided by President Wilson's typical American baby, the League of Nations) could the Englishman be induced to contemplate, at need, another war.

The whole of this vast and portentous manoeuvre falls naturally into three parts.

The first part was when Germany left the League, and Franco-British and German discussions were taking place. These discussions came to nothing because of the determination of France, and in a lesser degree of England, to hold Germany down to the oppressive terms of the Treaty of Peace.

The second part comprised the Anglo-Italian dispute. Hitler passed quite out of the picture for the moment. Parts one and two of this one great comprehensive manoeuvre seemed to have no visible connection. Abruptly the wrangle of the western Powers and of Germany was broken off. A quite new objective, as it seemed, had been found for all the contentious energy of London and Paris.

The third part witnessed a precipitate return from the

HOT-GOSPELLING AND WAR

Italian Dictator back to the German Dictator. Laval was the break employed in this ingenious machinery, to prevent the Anglo-Italian dispute from degenerating into an armed brawl.

Laval having served his turn, was dismissed, and the Franco-Soviet Pact again was brought forward. *That* was the signal for the reappearance of Germany in the centre of the stage. For, confronted with this flagrant menace, the Germans obviously could not continue to leave their western frontier unprotected — especially in view of the new *entente* of Great Britain with the Soviet.

So the third part, or Third Act, starts with the entrance of Germany's 'symbolic' army in the Demilitarized Zone of the Rhine. With that we have come full circle. What will now automatically happen is the solution — in Act Three — of the tortuous drama of which Abyssinia was Act Two.

§ 3

Hot-gossiping and War

Yes, Mr. Eden doubtless was right. Without religion, in some form, it is difficult to persuade people to engage in actions which plainly can bring them no profit, and only leave them worse off than they are at present.

But all Internationalism — and in this it resembles war — can only be accepted upon some non-practical, emotional, basis.

Internationalism must be *moral*. It is worth remembering this. The doctrine of internationalism would break down immediately if you withdrew from it its ethical support. This should be fairly obvious, since you cannot on *practical* grounds ask people to be internationalists.

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Charity begins at home, and suchlike proverbial sayings bear witness to that fact.

It is highly unpractical, if you are down to your last sixpence (and every nation to-day is down to its last sixpence, more or less) to give it to a beggar. With two million Englishmen out of work, it is not *practical* to ask Englishmen to occupy themselves with the lot of the coolie — or to involve the State in great loss of life and money, on behalf of Abyssinian testicle-hunters. It is even rather immoral, in addition to being unpractical: unless you can work up something stupendously *ethical* to outbid and to transcend all that.

You cannot ask a man to get himself killed or blinded in battle on behalf, of, say, a Mexican half-breed, who poor fellow 'has not got his deserts'; or of an Eskimo who just longs, all in vain, to enjoy the benefits of Habeas Corpus — and why *shouldn't* he have them! — a man's a man for a' that! You cannot demand all this except on *religious* grounds; and pretty hot gospelling at that!

If your *true* motives must remain secret and unavowed — because, if avowed, they would be considered unacceptable and even criminal: and if there is absolutely no visible and recognizable motive whatever: you are then *compelled* to shift the whole transaction on to some hysterical and irrational plane. No other course is open to you. Such is the situation regarding Hitlerian Germany. The British people have no practical reason to contemplate war with any country: it sounds insane even to consider such an eventuality. So how are they to push towards that dark consummation (devoutly to be wished but hardly to be avowed) *except* by playing incessantly upon their atavisms, and even reviving Christianity for the occasion. That is of course why the British Govern-

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ment were so angry when the Church, headed by the Archbishop of Canterbury, publicly counselled restraint in the matter of the Rhineland Staff talks. Official Religion had let them down!

No British statesman has ever *desired* a war with Germany. But they have apparently come to regard themselves as committed to a policy which is violently determined to rid Europe of Hitler. And they are well aware that that cannot be effected without the risk of another world-war. It is not so much 'fascist dictatorship' that excites them — for after all they left Mussolini in complete peace for a decade. Neither does *Dictatorship*, in itself, excite them so much as all that — even accompanied by a permanent Reign of Terror and the massacre of millions of people. For Soviet Russia has been left undisturbed. No, it can only be *something* about the internal regime of Adolf Hitler that excites in them this implacable mood.

It is of course by no means certain that people *can* be worked up by all the sanctified rhetoric in the world about 'sanctions', into a suitable state of mind for large-scale military massacre. For a war, that is, which has no visible, *material*, motive, this method may prove ineffective. All I am saying is that you can but try. *There is no other way.*

If you mix the issues — if you say, in the case of your Mussolian Dress-Rehearsal, 'We are going into this war as *moralists*. We *must* stop these beastly wars! War is the only way to stop war. If we fight enough wars, one day we *may* stop them. It's worth trying. But (under your breath, and with a wink) 'there is that little matter of the sea-route to India; and those dirty dagos would be in the Sudan before we could say Jack Robinson, once they had

Ethiopia' — if you went that way about it, you would be no better off and would probably be worse off. So if you go in for internationalist policies, it is best to leave it to the bishops and the socialists. They will bring it off, if it *can* be brought off.

§ 4

The Salvation Army of the 'Anti-fascist Front'

Although the Reformation expelled religion from its partnership with the profane State, religion — and its vulgar and unpleasant substitute, morals — may still strongly colour politics. The expelled partner is still called in when the old firm is in difficulties. The intense respectability of this venerable figure, observed about the place, is decidedly useful.

In politics, the only universalist doctrine in the field is Communism; in religion, Roman Catholicism. But it seems to me that universalism only has meaning when it derives from a religious impulse.

Mr. H. G. Wells insists that communism must be regarded as 'a religion'. What we call 'religion' is a western phenomenon and perhaps communism is a religion. Mr. Wells is quite likely right. In that case there are *two* universalist religions in the field, instead of one. And all politics are something more circumscribed than that.

However this may be, there is surely no one who can

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have failed to remark the distinctly 'religious' note dominating the uproar that has been going on since the summer of 1935, as if a contingent of the Salvation Army had marched into the street, and started proceedings. The bishops were all 'joining up' — *en masse* — in the ranks of the good old League, when the hue and cry was directed at Mussolini. England lived for six months in an atmosphere of Revivalism, as it were officially decreed.

All wars, in christian countries, are inclined, of course, to be holy-wars; but this next war is to be a *particularly* holy one when it comes. Indeed, that is the principal thing to notice in the whole affair. *This* blood-letting — this 'war against fascism and against war' — will be a purely altruistic act, even a particularly painful duty if it were our dear old friend Italy who was selected as the victim. We have been lifted — nay we have been *uplifted* — clean out of mere sordid politics, into a more rarified atmosphere.

§ 5

The 'two voices' — the voice of internationalism and that of nationalism

A somewhat shrewder prelate than most, not one of those who rush to buckle on their swords upon the slightest provocation, the Very Rev. Dean Inge, started a newspaper article a short time ago with a quotation

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from Edmund Burke. 'The principles of true politics are but those of morals enlarged,' it ran. And he went on to say that Europeans had not acted upon this principle at any time. 'We are pulled different ways by two voices, one calling us to acknowledge the brotherhood of man, in obedience to a Master with whom "there is neither Jew nor Greek, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free"; the other calling us to show unquestioning loyalty to King and Country.'

Well, the voice that we have been hearing in England of late, to the exclusion of the other, has beyond question been that calling upon us to deny such distinctions as that of 'Jew and Greek,' etc. etc. and think only in terms of such great abstractions as 'the brotherhood of man'. That is very much to the advantage of the Jew and the Greek, the barbarian, and the coolie, but whether it ultimately will be to *ours* is another matter! — so reflects the 'cynic' in us. And the moderate man, who is not a religionist, and yet not deaf to conscience, wishes that some middle way could be found, to abolish the coolie altogether — but *not*, of course, in an access of self-destructive contrition to exalt the coolie into the position of our Master, Overlord, and King.

But a plague upon this Golden Mean — this discredited, classical, way of experiencing human life! For a Dean, Dean Inge has read far too much Greek philosophy! So storms the extremist. No: it is the stern moral voice that has been uplifted in the land: and mere politics have fled, to hide their heads in shame! In order to justify Geneva that was essential. At the time of the Anglo-Italian dispute, war with a people whom Englishmen have never considered as anything but a pack of harmless ice-cream vendors had to be entertained as a possibility. The

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Genevan bible was indispensable to rally an unregenerate world to the more bloodthirsty passages of the Genevan Covenant — discarded by the British Government of the time in 1924, when dished up by the French as the 'Geneva Protocol', and now feverishly reconsidered in 1935, rapturously accepted, and reinstated, to conform to the internationalist policy associated with the name of Mr. Anthony Eden.

The Church far more than played its part in all this. The objectionably reasonable accents — not roaring in righteous ferocity, but a voice hushed in dismay and pity — of the papist hierarchy, was entirely drowned by the stentorian chorus of the bishops of our own communion. The Archbishop of Westminster, in his address at the Church of St. Edward the Confessor (Oct. 13th, 1935) delivered himself of the following unsuitable and uninspiring words:

'In spite of all we ought to have learnt from the last Great War, there are men who do not shrink from the chance of hurling the world once more into a whirlpool of blood, men who seem not to heed the utter ruin of our civilization which will follow another world-war.'

And as if that were not enough, he added:

'To speak plainly, the existing fascist rule, in many respects unjust, — it is one example of the present-day deification of Caesarism . . . I say that the fascist rule prevents worse injustice; and if fascism — which in principle I do not approve — goes under, nothing can save the country from chaos. God's cause goes under with it.'

It is a good thing that the jolly old League was not at war at the time, but merely discussing 'blockades', or I am not sure that the Sedition Act could not have been

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invoked. For what man would have the stomach to go off to the trenches in another holy-war-to-end-war, if the very priests poured cold water of this sort on his inflamed conscience.

§ 6

Bourgeois-Bolshevism, Socialism, and War

If the Church yielded in no way, in militant fervour, to the socialists, the socialists, on their side, certainly did not allow themselves to be outdone even by the Bishops in the first phases of this great affair. That socialism as much as the Anglican Church, is founded ultimately upon the Sermon on the Mount, we are all aware. But socialism is apt to forget this at normal times, as is, indeed, the Church. But on this occasion both socialism and the Church converged upon this historical 'Mount', with an almost indecent haste. And there they lifted up their voices together, in community-song, in one wild hymn of hate.

The Church of Rome is of necessity internationalist. And, in the first centuries of the christian era, christianity was internationalist. On the other hand, a 'National Church' does leave room for a little innocuous nationalism. Theoretically, a curate of the Church of England may be not only an exponent of 'muscular christianity', but likewise a bit of a patriot, if he wants to.

Now, socialism differs from communism, on this

national issue, rather as the Church of England differs from the Church of Rome. Socialism, in the last analysis, must be internationalist too: it can draw no distinction between the coolie and the British Workman. But in practice it is possible to forget this too-exacting brotherhood. Some latitude is left for *Blutsgefühl*.

Pre-war socialism, in Great Britain, concerned itself mainly with home-politics. All that has changed. Indeed to-day it could not do that: for then to justify itself (seeing the ghastly neglect of the working population) it would have to become a revolutionary party. So 'foreign affairs' are not only a heaven-sent escape for the National Government, but also for the Socialist Opposition. The more Mr. Morrison is compelled to talk about 'fascist dictatorship' in Italy or in Germany, the less he has to talk about the idle millions of workmen in England, or the international usury of the Banks.

But although the British socialist does not want to have to be a grubby, perspiring, 'revolutionary', half the time languishing in a prison-cell — he far prefers to be a dignified knight, accompanied by his lady, like Sir Walter Citrine, or to be the 'Duke of London', like Mr. Morrison — nevertheless, now that Bourgeois-Bolshevism is the order of the day and is accepted everywhere, in the 'best circles', the British socialist is very ready to bolshevize himself, at the same time that he *be-bourgeoises* himself. Sir Walter Citrine repairs to the internationalist Mecca at Moscow: and Sir Stafford Cripps suddenly reconsiders his opposition to the 'common front', and declares himself as of opinion that socialism in England should affiliate itself with communism.

To-day, in all these movements 'against fascism', the communists are at the back of political socialism. That

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has made all the difference. Socialism is of course destined to become communism (or *Bourgeois-Bolshevism*) and it is already deeply influenced by it. And, as I have said, communism is in its essence cosmopolitan. Communism occupies itself with the violent overthrow of *all* governments. Its leaders are cosmopolitan — in contrast to, say, Mr. Thomas or Keir Hardie.

Here you have the meaning of the 20 to 1 Trades Union Congress vote for war against Italy in the autumn of 1935. As to the argument, it is roughly as follows. The death in battle of a million or so Englishmen counts for nothing beside the making of the world safe for communism. Sir Walter Citrine was explicit. 'You will be defending Soviet Russia in defending Abyssinia,' he told his followers. (He might logically have added, 'In attacking Italy, you will be attacking Germany'.) Such a war as *that* (or such wars as that, for there would be lots more) would be the first step in world-revolution. 'World-revolution,' said Lenin, 'will follow upon capitalist-war.' And although Sir Walter Citrine would not venture to suggest to his followers, as Labour is at present constituted, that they should give up their lives in a social revolution (nor for that matter would this Labour Knight be the man to implement that policy) he is quite prepared as much as is Mr. Baldwin, to tell them to give up their lives in a particularly pure sort of *war*. For that would, in fact, be a sort of *civil war*, after all — seeing that it would be one of 'anti-fascists' against 'fascists'.

The presence and pressure of communism in the post-war world, then, has had the effect of turning all local, national, socialisms *outwards*. This is only the beginning, naturally. More and more, socialism will give up all attempts to 'improve the lot of the worker' at home.

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Indeed, communism will see to that. It will always counsel neglect of the working-class at home, since if you *do* 'improve their lot', they will then have no further use for the revolutionary. 'Foreign Affairs' will bulk more and more largely in the programme of the Socialist Party, upon that we may depend.

The Boer War could have been fought quite comfortably had the communist at that time been with us, since the Boers were only White Men. But *not* the Zulu War! For the Zulus are black. The Abyssinians are of course ideal people to go to war about; for they are not only black, but extremely right-thinking in the matter of good anti-Tolstoian ferocity. None of the beastly non-resistance spirit of Hindustan about *them*!

§ 7

The two Missionaries — Church and Soviet

What caused the English bishops to behave as they did in 1935 I am unable to say. Some of them, like the Bishop of Durham, seemed to be particularly enraged by the German treatment of the Jews. At one great meeting of the English clergy the Bishop of Durham apparently came near to swooning, in an access of anger, and was seen to be supporting himself against a wall or pillar. He had just been giving vent to his feelings about the elimination of the Jews from German public life. These paroxysms are of course understandable. At the

thought of the suffering of any human creature, anywhere in the world, the true christian should suffer too. And if certain people have said that the Bishop of Durham's feelings would have become him better were he in the habit of commiserating with the sufferings of the miners in his own diocese of Durham — one of the 'misery spots' of contemporary England — they are forgetting that the intenser christian emotions must always be abstract: that Saint Augustine's task, for instance, was to loosen and dissipate the ties of blood and to teach people to banish from their natures family instincts or an unchristian 'clannishness'. A Durham miner would, after all, be in the nature of *a child* almost of his own loins to this ecclesiastic. Nature would insinuate into his heart a sinful partiality for this 'son' or 'daughter' of Durham, against which he would instinctively react. Nevertheless, a Durham miner must often have wished he were a Jew in the past six months; and no Jew can ever have wished himself a Durham miner.

Other of these excitable gentlemen seemed to have taken rather more seriously than was necessary — far more seriously than Germans do — the German pagans who want to reinstate the religion of the primitive Teutons. There are only a few thousand of these lunatics, as it happens. As to *Kulturkrieg*, it is merely a 'war' upon the political power of the formerly immensely influential Catholic Centre Party in Germany. In order to unify Germany, it has been necessary not only to take action against the disruptive sectionalism of the various petty states, but also against the purely political organism of Catholic sectarianism. This is not 'anti-religious'. Mr. Duff Cooper, with far less provocation than the German political leaders, displays far more passion.

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But at a time when daily anti-Catholic riots were occurring in Edinburgh, and anti-Protestant street-battles in the heart of Belfast, it seems a little odd to some people that the English bishops should have concerned themselves with these more distant, and infinitely less violent, theological squabbles in Germany. Let us hope that Mr. Duff Cooper's outburst has enlightened them.

In addition to this kind of stimulus, the bishops seemingly had got it in their heads that the socialists and communists were stealing their thunder: and a certain element of rivalry and emulation entered into their militancy. At the Church Congress in October, 1935, this aspect of the matter came out with some distinctness. 'Marxian socialism was discussed by M. J. P. Lockhart.' And here is a press version of what he said.

'Bolshevism is Marxism plus a new ingredient,' he said. 'The conviction of a destiny of international service is not dead in Russia. The true Bolshevik is a missionary and a crusader. Some of the technique of the Messianic quality in Bolshevism has been borrowed from the Church and the attitude towards doctrine is, moreover, religious.'

This 'messianic' and 'missionary' quality in bolshevism, and the fact that the teaching of these marxian missionaries does definitely overlap and impinge upon the christian missionary appeal, was regarded as extremely disturbing by the assembled congress. The general feeling was that the Church Militant must look to its laurels, unless it wanted to be cut out by communism. So the Church more or less identified itself with communism for the occasion, in crying out for the blood of 'the aggressor'. Without going left-wing, it became

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indistinguishable from political left-wingism in the general rough and tumble. And when one was startled by a particularly bloodcurdling war-cry, it was impossible, in those days, to say whether it came from the throat of a bishop or a bolshie.

For many months it was the God of Justice, and not the God of Love, who was in the ascendant. It was the violence of the Old Testament, not at all the meekness of the New Testament, which prevailed in the counsels of the English Church.

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§ I

The Man-in-the-street and the Bishops

OF all the English bishops who were on the war-path in the wake of the Negus, and who would have sent our fleet into the Bay of Naples, having first corked up the Red Sea, none was more prominent than the Archbishop of York. But he is at least a bishop who is not all sound and fury; he is a bishop who is prepared to justify his behaviour by referring us back to recognized doctrine.

Now what disturbed the Plain Man, or more properly the Plain Christian, about the attitude of the British bishops, was the sneaking feeling that there was something *unchristian* about it all — about clergymen advocating an appeal to arms.

What happened was what always happens under such circumstances. There is a misunderstanding as old as the beginning of organized religion, a misunderstanding on the part of the simple layman, who labours under a misapprehension where the cleric is concerned.

What were the circumstances? The Anglo-Italian dispute reached its climax. The bishops visited the Foreign Office. The Government tipped them the wink. The Church breathed fire. And the laymen reacted as he always reacts when that happens.

A clergyman, it is popularly felt, should go about

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'offering the other cheek'. He should practise the imitation of Christ, by contriving to be mild and meek, and leave it to the worldly to lose their tempers and proffer bloodthirsty threats. This is an ineradicable misreading, it seems, of the priest's vocation, where the uneducated man is concerned. And it does great damage to the authority of the Church.

As to the religion they profess and their understanding of its rudiments, it would be a curious experiment to select at random a dozen of the humbler churchgoers in England, and oblige them to pass an examination upon the foundations of their belief. Mostly it would be like asking a dozen parrots to enlarge upon the significance of their habitual repertoire of speech. But, in any case, for the majority of churchgoers, belief is a very simple thing: whereas of course for an exalted ecclesiastic it is a very complex thing. There is one law for the rich and one for the poor; and the same applies to religion. And the prophet, set up against the priest, among the ancient Hebrews, recognized this fact.

But the murmuring that occurred on all hands with regard to the ferocity of the Bench of Bishops was a little disquieting, as such things always must be, for the Church. And the Archbishop of York, I was glad to see, reacted to this popular outcry with some vigour: for people were not only asking why bishops, these Men of Peace, were so busy with the things of war, but were also inquiring whether it was in accordance with Christ's teaching that we should go to war at all with our fellow-christians, even if they were dagos and catholics.

The Archbishop of York on that occasion quite rightly described this attitude as partaking of the Marcionite

heresy. He explained that there *had* been people, very early in the history of Christianity, who had entertained these sort of notions, and that they were called Marcionites. They were heretics — the sort of people you *burn*.

This, quite naturally, meant very little indeed to the plain churchgoer. When he had uttered his indignant protest against being urged on to the shambles by one of his own mitred bishops, he certainly had not supposed that he was being guilty of *heresy*. Nor had he the faintest idea who Marcion might be. And yet the Archbishop of York told him that his objections to war savoured of heresy. And they did. They had a very heretical look.

There are occasions when to be practising a religion they do not understand, gets people into awkward predicaments. The common misunderstanding to which I have just alluded, operating in the case of the recent agitation for war on the part of the leaders of the Church, threw into startling relief this fact. What a blind-man's-buff a community is apt to indulge in when it allows its religion to step in and lend a hand with its politics became painfully apparent. For politics are quite confusing enough, seeing how slight and superficial a knowledge the average voter in a parliamentary democracy has of them (seeing how he staggers blindfold to the voting urn, and is about as responsible for what he does on that occasion as an imbecile in the grip of a narcotic) without theology barging in and making confusion worse confounded.

I do not wish to be responsible for any further confusion: but undoubtedly if it is your aim to be entirely emancipated — really an *esprit libre* as the philosophers of the Second Enlightenment would have called it — you must be able to keep a clear head about the religious

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issue, and exactly understand how your religion fits in to your politics — or does *not* fit in.

Not only is communism being implemented upon an emotional system of a religious type; but now even good old 'democracy' in its 'crusading' is taking on the trappings of religion, too, and is compelling the Church to assist it in this merely political racket. And since the western democracies — unlike Soviet Russia — are technically christian, not only the emotionality, but also the dogma, of our Church is to-day of importance in the field of politics. For you cannot *call upon God to witness* without knowing a little what you mean by God! 'God' is something that cannot be taken for granted.

In passing, I may say that I regard this situation, as between Church and State, as infinitely to be regretted. The politics involved are sordid, corrupt, and tortuous: and the Church can only suffer belittlement by associating itself with them. That is my personal view. But it is only my business here to attempt to throw however imperfect a ray of light upon this uniform obscurity.

§ 2

The two religions that we simultaneously practise

You may not wish to know anything about Marcion, or any other heretic. Far be it from me to blame you (though I suggest it could do you no harm). If that is the case, you only have rapidly to turn over these pages, and proceed to my next chapter. But if you take that line, I must warn you that your judgment upon the pros and cons of all contemporary political debate will be insecurely founded: you cannot hope for instance to fathom the simplest harangues of your Minister of

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War, nor to understand the Covenant of the League of Nations: and the next time a ballot paper comes round, desiring you to declare whether England should engage itself more deeply in the ideology of the League, or not, your answer will be worthless. In that it will not differ from ninety per cent of the other answers sent in. But there you are: it is as well to know where you stand.

For my part, I have always felt it in my bones, I am afraid, that I had the makings of a heretic. And for a long time now I have been able to give a name to the particular type of heresy of which, in a more devout age, I should have been guilty. — I should have been a Marcionite. Laodicean as I undoubtedly am, it is something to know what sort of heretic one would be, if it came to the point.

As you are no doubt aware, the christian religion is so to speak *two* religions, rather paradoxically welded together. One of these religions is Judaism, and the other is (as I should put it) Christianity proper. The fact of this division is expressed in the co-existence of the two distinct books of our Scriptures — namely what we call the 'Old' Testament, and what we call the 'New' Testament.

The English Protestant has always been an omnivorous reader of the Old Testament. And the celebrated French philosopher, Taine, after a reading of the Old Testament (which he regarded as an extremely blood-thirsty composition) expressed himself as distinctly thankful for the fact that the English Channel lay between himself and the English People, who were brought up on such a violent and intolerant literature — I tell you this little story merely to show you the way in which

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many people have regarded much that is to be found in this 'Old' portion of our sacred books.

Mr. Bernard Shaw, who is a very sincere and very admirable type of christian (though undoubtedly a great heretic) reminded an audience in the Kingsway Hall, on one occasion, that the Old Testament was in the main merely the record of the doings of a small and primitive people, and as such should be regarded. The savagery revealed in it, common to all nations at a primitive stage of their evolution, could not be set up as exactly a model of social behaviour.

That there is an enormous discrepancy between the standards of the Old and New Testaments is, however, obvious. The burden of the first, the 'Old', is to 'smite your enemies hip and thigh'. The burden of the 'New' is to 'offer the other cheek'. And clearly you cannot do both these things simultaneously.

As colonists the English have invariably started in upon 'Old' Testament lines — have 'smitten hip and thigh', and exacted 'an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth'. Once they had entirely subjugated the people in question, they have weighed in with the 'New' Testament — although still keeping the 'Old' handy. This has greatly bewildered their cringing subjects, and eventually led these clear-sighted 'natives' to charge their conquerors with hypocrisy. And this apparent double-facedness has always played its part in the somewhat equivocal conduct of British foreign policy, other aspects of which we have already discussed.

I hope that by these few remarks I shall be giving no offence to the more simple of the devout. There is no susceptibility that I would take more care to respect. But I am engaged in providing a popular account of

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heresy with special regard to the duty to shed blood. And I am also engaged — since religion is again playing a great part, directly, or indirectly, in politics — in attempting to introduce some order into people's minds. And I fail to see how that enlightenment can come without some such analysis as this.

§ 3

The 'God of Justice' and the 'God of Love'

Whether Christianity *can* ever be detached from Judaism is, I suppose, an open question. But in order to make the situation clear to you let me quote from Dr. Rendel Harris (*'Marcion's Book of Contradictions'*). This learned theological controversialist was here writing shortly after the conclusion of the Great War.

'I think Dr. Hart,' he said, 'dreaded what is now imminent in certain theological circles, a return to the Marcionite attitude with regard to the Old Testament. Here again, I did not share his fears. The Old Testament can take care of itself: Christianity is not yet nearly detached from Judaism. On the contrary, it is always gravitating back into it again. A great war is a powerful stimulus in that direction. It is sure to make us either Jews or Moslems.'

It is 'the Marcionite attitude with regard to the Old Testament', of course, that I have been preparing you to understand by my foregoing remarks. It is not, I need hardly say, an 'irreligious' attitude, that of the Marcionite, but very much the contrary. It is indeed the result of a very great concern for spiritual values, and also for the welfare of the teaching of Christ.

Pure Christianity is an emotional, revolutionary,

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creed. Those who describe the Gospel according to St. Luke as a revolutionary tract scarcely exaggerate. But Jesus Christ was *not* just another old-style Hebrew Prophet—appearing on the scene rather late in the day, but quite in the tradition.

A little reflection should convince us of this. What mainly distinguishes the Prophet of the Old Testament is his Timon-like ferocity, is it not? He is made up of invective and denunciation. Whereas what distinguishes the incomparable Prophet of the New Testament is His 'sweetness and light'. He is poles apart from his furibund predecessors. His passivity, in contrast to the old Hebrew aggressiveness, distinguished him in the most absolute way from the prophetic fraternity of the old order.

Again, what Matthew Arnold described as the supreme contribution of the Hebrew to civilization is the concept *righteousness*. That, I think, is doing less than justice to that redoubtable and often scintillating people. For in contemporary ears the word *righteousness* has an unpleasant legalistic ring. Somehow *self-righteousness* seems inseparable from it.

But although we must relieve the Hebrew, and especially the modern Jew, of the burden of that doubtful compliment, it may yet help to guide us in our approach to the Marcionite view of the Old Testament. *Law* is of the essence of the Old Testament, as it may truly be said that *Love* is the guiding principle of the New.

Now the fearful conception of punishment — as also the rather too material, and sometimes degrading, conception of reward: the implacable division of mankind into the Righteous and the Unrighteous — with the distinct tendency to see to it that those who submitted to one's will were labelled the *good* and those who dissented

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the *bad*: all these manifestations of the legal mind *in excelsis*, this apotheosis of Law, and of criminal law at that — along with its terrible penal code, of ‘the eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth’ type — apparently revolted the heretical mind of Marcion. He had the most absolute veneration for Jesus and applied himself to imitate His gentle and compassionate ways. But he found it quite impossible to stomach, side by side with this beautiful teaching, the Chamber of Horrors of the Old Testament.

As Marcion saw it, it was as if you had sought to include in the same system of edification, the bloody anecdotes of the Norse Sagamen with the teaching of Plato; only more so, for he would not have accepted such an approximation as that. The murderous feuds of the primitive Scandinavians are in the same category as the barbarities of the primitive Israelites: but Christ, for him, was something far more than even the gentlest and wisest philosopher. So you see — or at least you ‘glimpse’ — his predicament: how it came about that Marcion was a heretic.

This passionate heretic — cited by the Archbishop of York last autumn, when he was replying to the critics of the Church (which on that occasion, was certainly drawing very near to the Old Testament ideal, of implacable self-righteousness) would have distinguished, in the most absolute manner, the God of the Old Testament from the God of the New Testament. The former was the ‘God of Justice’. The latter was the ‘God of Love’. And for him these principles could not truly co-exist.

§ 4

Marcion's exaltation of the Principle of Forbearance and of Gentleness

In his exaltation of the personality of Christ, Marcion did not stop at refusing to see Him confounded with the necessarily vindictive deity who was the symbol of human justice. He refused to contemplate even the symbolic, vicarious punishment of his divine Master, He could no more be the victim of Justice, than He could be its savage incarnation.

The heresy of Socinus, in its effort to telescope the Trinity, or the Arian heresy, engaged in a similar occupation, object merely to an association of powers, of a plurality of figures, impairing the unity of the monotheistic idea. But the *other* association (which led to and not from polytheism) seems an equally troublesome one: the complicity of God in the unsatisfactory nature of His creation.

It was this difficulty which, in the case of Marcion, produced his interesting notion of Christ's non-humanity. He considered that such a virtuous creature must have come to us from another universe of things, and that He was only in *appearance* human. He thought that it would be a derogation of the divine purity of this Teacher whom he had idealized, that He should be allowed to participate in the sad shortcomings and even disgusting conditions of the human state. It is not unlike the idea of the phantom Buddha: the real Buddha sitting all the while in the Tusita Heaven.

It is an axiom almost of western thought that the advantages of the judaic religion over almost all others is

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its primitive monotheism. These rude patriarchs conceived this formidable notion of a solitary God — such is the general idea. They seemed thereby from the start to have gone beyond the pagan, and penetrated to some unique all-embracing region of thought. The personality of a river, or the personality of the sun, is, after all, it is advanced, like the personality of a man. It is contingent on other suns and other rivers, and a multitude of other personalities. Such a conception, so imperfect in power and in function, is not an adequate object for the highest human adoration.

But there are many practical objections to this view. Just as a picture ceases to be a picture, but becomes a *spot* and then becomes *nothing*, when it is removed beyond the reach of our vision; so the mind can neither imagine nor see anything *perfectly* except at a certain fixed distance from it. The only way it can imagine infinitude is as NOTHING. (There is an intermediate stage at which it can imagine it as a featureless spot.) The only real logical God of man is the exact opposite in every respect to him — the infinity of his finitude, the eternity of his life-in-time: in short, his support and explanation. For the only total explanation of anything finite is its total opposite.

This is Spinoza's god; which, whatever way you turn it, is nothing but a Blank. His is a true monotheism; and it was a Jew who most perfectly expressed it. His God is Everything and Nothing: the effect of his God, that is, when chemically applied to our existence, is to make it cancel out. It makes it Nothing. 'Definition' reduced by 'definition', that is God: the only ONE GOD.

But the patriarchal divinity of the early Israelites is hardly in that category. Rather was He, as originally conceived, the Only God because the Israelites were the

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Only People. The patriarchs of the Pentateuch were quite aware that their neighbours had other gods of their own equally exclusive. The Canaanites had their Baal or Lord: and each district even boasted its peculiar divinity. Baal-Zebub, Baal-Berith, Baal-Peor, in the Old Testament, make us familiar with this idea.

The Ancient Hebrews were in fact, theologically, not unlike the Hellenes in one respect — in their attitudes to the foreigner. To-day we should call it 'nationalism': the same arrogant exclusiveness that caused the Greek to regard everybody else as a 'barbarian', caused the Hebrew to isolate himself, and to attach an absolute value to his concept of the Deity — of *his* Deity.

Now the God to whom the christian kneels to-day is not the 'enlarged non-natural man', obviously, of early rabbinical fancy — is not the God who was supposed to be a great student of the Torah, and to get into heated arguments with his angels about the niceties of some levitical decision. Nor is He that God of Justice dominating the Old Testament. But for Marcion, two millenia ago, He *was* that: Marcion had in front of him, in stark silhouette, these two great images, namely that of a God of Justice and that of a God of Love, offered simultaneously for his perplexed adoration. And he made an heroic attempt to separate these inconsistent principles. He did not want, nor was he able to accept the notion of, a *human* God — a God of Morality. A supernatural extension, merely of the penal code of Man, was not the type of judgment that he was seeking.

Although you may say that this problem of a Levantine religionist, such a long while ago, can be no concern of ours, I am sure you would be wrong. In moments of deep disturbance in human society men tend to return

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upon their steps, in a sense, and go back to the sources of their communal personality. As Dr. Rendel Harris put the matter, 'a great war is a powerful stimulus' to drive back the religion we inherit into the still older religion out of which it grew. — The shadow of *coming* war, even, is capable of doing much the same thing as the shadow of a war that is just past.

But in that case we are, to some extent, again in the position of Marcion. We are brought face to face with these mutually destructive principles, inhabiting respectively the 'old' and the 'new' compartments of our Holy Writ. We find ourselves torn between the dictates of Love and of Justice, as they are found in these particular bodies of teaching. We can feel almost the air of the patristic time about us, and we realize the onus of decision that lay upon these primitive builders of the Church: out of *which* of two materials should they fashion the Divine Concept, that was to control the ages to come? Should it be the principle of a compassionate understanding: or should it, on the other hand, be the spirit of the Grand Inquisitor! And if we have quoted at us, 'I bring you not Peace, but a Sword!' we can only disregard it. The issue, in the main, is very clear, when we are taken back as far as that.

Well, then, if we are to challenge the warlike utterances of his Grace of York (or, following in his footsteps, of Mr. War Minister Cooper) it must be after this fashion. We can only do it strictly speaking as heretics. But if the bishop finds it necessary to go back to Marcion to justify a second world-war, we can go back there, too. And however imperfect my *exposé*, what I have just described is the sort of thing we should find at the beginning of

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things. The dogma upon which our prelates rely to support their case is not, in the first place, constant. And if *we* were the bishops, we could repudiate so marked a swing as all that to the judaic end of this theologic spectrum. It should be the moment to make use, surely, of this inherent duality; to advance and reaffirm the specifically christian attributes; and to abandon the rest to the politicians, who alone are the proper exponents of all that Marcion abhorred.

ARE YOU FOR THE SUPER-STATE OR ARE YOU FOR THE SOVEREIGN STATE?

§ I

How long will the stock of post-christian emotionality hold out?

THAT man is a religious animal is incontestable: so it is no wonder that religion, or religious modes of feeling, keep breaking in, in this fashion, upon his most prosaic undertakings. We are accustomed to refer to this phenomenon as 'idealism'. But it is better to have your 'idealism' awakened by the appeal of a lofty abstraction, such as the concept 'God', than by a tomato, or a turbine; I believe we may agree as to that.

In the matter of 'religious' manifestations, the peculiar godless christianity of Anglosaxon communism is entirely meaningless: in effect it is an exploitation of the automatic christian responses and reflexes which have survived the extinction of Christianity among the western proletariat, or intelligentsia. It is concocted out of the refuse of discarded emotions, engrained in Christendom, and which cannot at once be extirpated — emotions of 'decency', of 'charity', of 'kindliness', of 'compassion', and of 'selflessness'.

All these things possessed until yesterday the authority of the dogma of a great religion. But *without* that authority they are meaningless, and can only survive for a relatively short time. For there is no *rational* basis at all for the cultivation of those feelings.

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There is no obligation upon any man to be 'kind' or to be 'charitable', or to be 'unselfish.' As an animal, instinct teaches him to be the reverse. There is the herd-instinct of course: but a pack of wolves is not an association of christian quadrupeds; but rather a murder-gang. Communist Imperialism, as it stands to-day (and the 'Pink Dawn', of *The Times*, March 18th, 1936, is merely a pink herring) is half-way between the gunman-gang of the wolf-pack and a mock-christian phalanstery.

As a way out of the religious impasse, Judaism has been suggested as a solution. There would really be no obstacle, it has been contended, to a *simplification* of Christianity, in that sense. But that solution would, of necessity, leave out Christ. There is far too much marcionism in what is left of Christianity and post-christianity, for that not to present difficulties. And even an arrangement by virtue of which Jesus remained there with the status of a prophet — which He has always occupied among the Mohammedans — would probably be unacceptable to-day to a majority of christians; though in fifty years time it is possible that that may no longer be the case.

However, the religious issue lies ambushed at the centre of all politics to-day. Religious *emotionality* — a mystical apparatus — is employed at this moment, everywhere, as an indispensable auxiliary of every political movement, whether it be the salvationist imperialism of the Soviets, or the nationalism of Italy, Japan, or Germany.

The only question is — *How long will this world-stock of the raw material of religion hold out?* Already in many quarters it is wearing a little thin, and falling into sheer bathos. Mystical fervour about a tractor or a driving-belt cannot last for very long, without degenerating into

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a ghastly burlesque. Man cannot live on tractors and driving-belts alone. Then we shall be back face to face with the primeval jungle. At the first outbreak of uncontrollable laughter men would realize, in a flash (like the First Man) that they were naked.

But in the old parliamentary democracies there is still a full complement of bishops, there is still the uneasy shadow of a God: and so the politicians are able to enlist the religious machinery of the feudal ages, in combination with the diluted and secularized christian moralism of the Socialist Parties.

It is upon these post-christian, semi-christian, and state-christian foundations (the Church of Rome holding somewhat aloof — neither, it seems, for God nor for his enemies, but attempting to make the best of both worlds) that the 'new world' of President Wilson and Karl Marx is being built: the world of Class-war and World-peace.

But I think it will by this time be sufficiently clear why I have considered it necessary to devote an entire part to providing an answer to the Archbishop of York. The Bishops have come to be little more than great State-Officials: and the State, as represented by the Baldwin Government, is so unsatisfactory an affair that the Church must suffer, at such a crisis, for it is unavoidably contaminated. And, unlike the Ancient Hebrews, we have no 'prophets' — except dear, kind, old Mr. Lansbury.

So now I can turn, with more confidence of carrying you along with me, to a consideration of that super-state centred upon Geneva, which is being floated on a tide of pseudo-christian and communist 'idealism' — our lords and masters gone suddenly all Wilsonian, and hobnobbing with the disciples of Karl Marx.

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§ 2

Are you for Centralized Government, or for Non-centralized Government?

The authority of Great Britain at present in Europe, I started by saying in this part, was no longer its own authority, but that of the international order. It rests upon a 'collective', communal, authority, rather than upon the authority of the individual Commonwealth of Britain, which shrinks every day into less and less importance.

In that fact is to be sought the whole significance of what is occurring in England at this moment. The more masculine government of France has, its socialists notwithstanding, built up an immense offensive and defensive armament, until France is the most powerful single state in the world. The British National Government has taken its left-wing much more seriously: and to-day Great Britain is in fact *only* able to speak in that authoritative voice by means of a delegated authority. The British Fleet, for instance, did not particularly frighten Mussolini. It was the French and English Banks that caused him to swallow insult after insult.

At the present time, if you are a democratic statesman, you have to decide whether you are going to stand on your own two legs, or whether you are going to become a part of a theoretic, universalist centipede. You cannot have it both ways. And, as I have demonstrated, the British Government has chosen the latter course.

I will now return to the question, which, for many years to come, the whole world will be busy answering, in one sense or the other; the question, namely: — 'Are

ONE OR MORE GOVERNMENTS?

you for the Super-state of Internationalism, or for the Sovereign State of non-International Politics?' — this question can be put more generally as follows. 'Are you for centralized government, or for decentralized government?'

Such a question is of necessity extremely crude. *A League of Nations Ballot* 'yes' or 'no' is not demanded of you. But in a very general way you will be compelled to declare yourself an adherent of one or other of those two theories of government. For people have started legislating for the world at large, under our very noses — 'so careless of the single life' as to alarm even the least self-assertive of peoples.

Our childlike rulers, with this new internationalist toy of theirs, have plunged headlong into a policy in which the concrete and manageable 'nation' is to be neglected, in favour of that abstraction, Mankind. They have begun thinking and talking in terms of 'the nations'. And already 'the nation' is forgotten.

In this universal policy of 'indivisibility', to which they have succumbed, the *individual* nation suffers the same neglect — and almost opprobrium, especially should it pipe up and draw attention to its individual needs — as other mere individuals. Those who protest against the neglect of the latter are indignantly called 'individualists': those who protest against indifference to the former are scornfully dismissed as 'nationalists'. For we have now passed (arm-in-arm with M. Litvinov, or hand-in-hand with M. Maisky) into a world of high abstractions, where Turkestan and Tampico are as much 'home-counties' as Middlesex and Rutland.

The destiny of England, perhaps for centuries to come, is to be decided in a Swiss city by a motley collection of

gentlemen whose names most of us are unable to pronounce — ‘led’, or is it in reality *followed*, by Mr. Eden, whose name we can pronounce, but which we many of us wish we had never heard, except in connection with the tree of good-and-evil, and the symbolical courtship of Adam and Eve: and these decisions are to be arrived at without anyone taking the trouble to consult England about it — indeed as if England had lost its identity, in this ‘wider’, ‘indivisible,’ issue, and so could be passed over as a nameless ‘anachronism’.

Yet, if the people of England *were* consulted, they might very well decide that some form of local — if you like parochial — government would, for the moment, secure their interests best. Who knows? They might, if they were given the opportunity of judging, mistrust and repudiate an international parliament — irregularly assembled, and freakishly conducted — for whom ‘England’ would be a mere geographical expression — not the home of forty million highly important people.

§ 3

Are you for The Part: or are you for The Whole?

These forty million odd Britons have attained to a high degree of material comfort; but they are defective in reasoning power, since it has been somewhat at the expense of their horse-sense that all the increased mechanical horse-power at their disposal has been supplied to them.

FOR PART OR WHOLE?

So this spot of thinking they have to do must be made as easy as possible. The problem they are up against has to be stated to *some* extent in abstract terms: yet it should not be impossible to explain the meaning of these antagonistic principles — that of *centralized government*, and that of *decentralized government*.

The problem is one of the fundamentals of all civilized, free institutions. It was, of course, the problem that so perplexed the revolutionary politicians whose task it was to fashion the new France, about to emerge from the convulsions of the French Revolution. The same problem came up for solution — as, under such circumstances, it must always come up — when the North American colonists had to manufacture a constitution for the seceding dominions, after the War of Independence. And they finally settled upon that admirable triangular association in power, of (1) the Federal Government, (2) the State Legislature, and (3) the Justiciary (that nice balancing of power which recently has proved so very distasteful to that typical *centralizer*, President Roosevelt — ‘a born communist, but he doesn’t know it’, according to Mr. Shaw: and so favourable to the crude ambitions of the late ‘Kingfish’).

No Englishman has any right to a vote, at the present time, who has not firmly laid hold of the political principle governing the constitutions of France and the United States, but specially the latter; for any vote cast in an English election to-day is a vote that will be utilized by those who are monkeying about with the entire world, and deciding what constitution shall be given to its patchwork quilt of subject peoples, black, yellow, and white. And it is the duty of the voter to intervene, in his small way, on the side of those who wish to retain the

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maximum freedom for *the parts*; and to withhold unreasonable and too oppressive power from *the whole*. For *the whole* would be only a verbal figment: it would mean government by a handful of individuals.

So let us put this great and critical question in another form: namely — *Are you for the part?* or *Are you for the whole?* If you simply *have* to make a choice — and without casting any reflection upon *the world in general* — are you for yourself or for Man-in-the-Abstract? Or: Are you in favour of the sovereign state (the part): or of the super-state (the whole)?

Your answer to this question will not mean that you are for, or against, co-ordination of effort. It means — Are you prepared to allow the power to regulate your private (in this case your 'national') affairs to pass out of your hands for ever? Will you hand yourself over, body and soul, to a roomful of gentlemen whom you will never see, in some place of which you may never have heard: or do you prefer to see — and if necessary *kick* — the gentlemen who are to rule you? The latter is of course the more satisfactory alternative.

It is an exact parallel, upon the plane of politics, of the alternative of the old-fashioned *personal* business, as contrasted with the 'soulless', anonymous mammoth syndicate, or corporation, which has succeeded it; and from the malignant influence of which everyone is at present suffering, directly or indirectly.

A march was stolen upon 'modern man' as regards that highly unsatisfactory evolution, into a world of bigger and ever bigger business, was it not? We all know that now. No one to-day can do anything about it, however. But in this other matter — that of politics, which have come to be to-day, make no mistake about it, world-

ONLY 'FASCISTS' DESIRE TO BE FREE
politics — at least there is still *the vote*, for what that is worth. And there are other ways. *No* way should be regarded as too unorthodox to obstruct and to prevent this transfer and translation of our hereditary freedom, from within the frontiers of a recognized and homogeneous state, over into the keeping of some abstract international arcanum.

Our freedom, or such as remains of it, is *incarnated* in our language and in the soil within those hereditary frontiers where it has been bred and developed. And 'the frontier' of Great Britain is not, and never can be, 'the Rhine'. That is the frontier of some internationalist abstraction, with which the less we have to do the better.

§ 4

It is not only 'fascists' who desire to be free

So we too, in Great Britain — without ever having passed through any visible revolution in our time — are now called upon to think out what is to be the structure of a new society. Of *all human society*, as a matter of fact. And those among us who realize the difficulties besetting such a task — if too despotic a power is not to be given to any one group of men over all other men — are perhaps more inclined to the *fascist* side (which at the moment is the recognized exponent of the decentralized government of sovereign states) than to the *communist* side (that of advocating a centralized, all-powerful, internationalist oligarchy).

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This does *not* make us 'fascists', or even 'nationalists'. It does not mean that we are regarding these alternatives in anything but an objective and opportunist frame of mind. Because a thing is *not red*, it does not follow that it must be *buff*, *black*, or *green*. There are other colours in the spectrum.

Do you, or do you not, stand for an international order in the world, as from to-day? Or as a variant: *Are you for the super-state or for the sovereign state?* Should the above question be answered by you to the effect that you are *not* in favour of an out-and-out internationalism, that does not necessarily mean that you are a 'nationalist', in the blackshirted sense. You may be, as you may not. It does not at all follow that you are, although it is quite certain that people will *say* that you are. Which is of course quite another matter.

There are plenty of men who would not relish the idea of being governed from a world-centre, situated at New York, or at Rome, or at Moscow, who are nevertheless not jingoes or 'My-country-right-or-wrong 'uns.'

§ 5

Martial Law, in a 'Dictated Peace'

The fascist state, or the national-socialist state, is not, it is self-evident, calculated to develop the maximum of freedom, to say the least of it. It does not even *think* of freedom. It cannot. It is a state virtually under martial law. It is such a state because the War never ended, and through no fault of its own: because the Peace of Versailles was not intended to be a 'Peace', in anything but name: or, if it *was* envisaged as a Peace, it

could never become that, and it was madness to suppose that it could.

But unfree as those countries are, under 'fascist' rule, they are infinitely more free than is Russia, under communist rule (the 'Pink Dawn' suddenly espied by *The Times*, notwithstanding). In many ways they are as free as, in some respects freer than, us. No ordinary Russian citizen can obtain a passport to visit any other country; a German or Italian can. You see no Russians here, staying in the London hotels or walking our streets: you see only a highly selective handful of officials of Russian nationality. But an ordinary Russian citizen cannot even move freely about his own country. And the more widely that system was extended, the more oppressive, necessarily, it would become. The more we should all be battened down into our holes — like the Indians who composed the Jesuit Empire in South America in the eighteenth century, who were punished if they were seen talking to men of a neighbouring township.

So if a choice of two evils must be made, by a man who has any care for freedom — and who cannot be fooled into believing that men tied down, like tethered goats, to the spots upon which they live, are *free* — if such a choice were imposed on him he would choose the lesser evil. That is mere common sense — though it may be bad marxism, and may even be immoral, for all I know.

But the decisions that must finally be made — and before very long, it seems to me, at the rate at which we are all travelling just now — are of a far more complex order than that. The merely fascist-communist wrangle obscures the issue. For it gets people into the mood in which they come to believe that the only two possible alternatives are the marxist and fascist — marxist, or

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fascist, *for all time*: that you must select one or the other, and, once you have done that, just sit back: for you the die is cast, you take no further interest, having acquired your neat little label, and learnt your formula.

§ 6

We have no 'dictator', but are we dictated to?

Both fascists and marxists admit the principle of dictatorship, or of 'despotism'. They believe that it is desirable to concentrate in the hands of one man as much power as possible. Most Englishmen to-day have a peculiar horror of this notion: though in fact it is largely a matter of *words*. 'Despot', or 'tyrant', are evil-sounding words: whereas the 'despotism' of a class, or of a 'Cabinet' can go practically unnoticed. The reality — in distinction to the more emotional response to words — may be very satisfactory, or very unsatisfactory.

But it is of course a commonplace of controversy about social reform that tyranny does not, alas, come to an end when you have eliminated *one* man — when you have 'killed the king', and stuck up a dozen men there in the place of one. The Sovereign People can be just as oppressive and tyrannical as a sovereign ruling over the people — indeed the individual may be far less free when at the mercy of *everybody*, as it were (of an anonymous bureaucratic machine, the mild^{er} and Gilbertian — or Herbertian — example of which is 'Dora') than when he

NO 'DICTATOR' BUT DICTATED TO

is, ultimately, at the mercy of one man. For the single tyrant has *so many* subjects to oppress — he cannot oppress them all together and at once, except by indirect action.

I have reminded you of this very trite fact in order to make possible for you a more intelligent approach to the burning question of 'dictatorship'; that question which so exercises the mind of our present, by no means unhigh-handed, rulers. Indeed, Mr. Baldwin as we know is unable to make a speech without referring, in scandalized accents, to these solitary despots, whose mere existence is evidently very much on his mind, more especially those of the fascist variety.

This *personal rule* is the bugbear of all western so-called 'democratic' oligarchs, just as much as it was in the time of the Stuarts, when the City magnificos decreed the destruction of the ill-fated Stuart monarch: just as much as when the Barons got their *Magna Carta* (in other words, legal sanction for their own despotism, in place of that of a hereditary king) — a charter which formerly English school-children were taught had something to do with the *freedom* of the British nation as a whole.

All over Europe, since the War, personal rule — what has been called 'caesarism' — has once more become suddenly fashionable. In Russia, Germany, Italy, Portugal, Hungary, there are single men, who exercise more or less despotic power. Some of them will cut your head off as soon as look at you. Others will merely confine you in a 'camp' behind barbed wire if you are regarded as exceptionally tiresome. And some have no penal camps at all: these are very mild despots indeed — more like great-hearted but rather peppery uncles. If you promote an armed revolt they send you to a beautiful island

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set in the midst of the salubrious waters of the Southern Atlantic, to think things over, and (it is hoped) to decide in future to be a better boy.

Stalin, being an ex-bank robber, is, perhaps not unnaturally, the roughest of these despots: and the Portuguese dictator — but '*les Portugais sont toujours gais*', it has been said — is the most attractive and accommodating. The 'despot' at Lisbon does not seem to mind how often you disturb the peace, providing you formally repent, and promise not to do it again. (Primo de Rivera was much on the same lines; indeed, he was so little of a 'despot', he was of so accommodating a nature, that he got shot up for his pains, by over-exposure of his person, in a spirit of democratic promiscuity.)

A great many hard things are said about 'dictators' — the very word suggests, as I have said, something very much out of the way and highly unpleasant. And of course it is always implied that the system of government prevailing *with us* is absolutely free of anything that could be described as 'dictation'. For are we not a 'democracy'?

§ 7

'A good despot'

But let me take, from the unlikeliest quarter, what is not exactly a testimonial for despotism, but at least a grudging admission regarding that form of government. It will perhaps serve to clear the mind of the plain man of a few common misconceptions. My quotation is from Chapter III of John Stuart Mill's essay on *Representative Government*. It opens as follows:

'It has long (perhaps throughout the entire duration of British freedom) been a common saying, that if *a good*

‘ A GOOD DESPOT ’

despot could be ensured, despotic monarchy would be the best form of government.’

This, straight away, is a statement that may quite well alarm some readers very much indeed. For to reflect that they have for all these years been inhabiting a country where, since time immemorial, ‘perhaps throughout the entire duration of British freedom’, a good despot — or a good ‘dictator’ — has been regarded as the highest political ideal, may ‘strike them all of a heap’. But I will proceed.

‘The supposition is, that absolute power in the hands of an eminent individual, would ensure a virtuous and intelligent performance of all the duties of government. Good laws would be established and enforced, bad laws would be reformed; the best men would be placed in all situations of trust; justice would be as well administered, the public burdens would be as light and as judiciously imposed, every branch of administration would be as purely and as intelligently conducted, as the circumstances of the country and its degree of intellectual and moral cultivation would admit. I am willing, for the sake of argument, to concede all this.’

But of course having conceded it (to all those Britons, who, ‘throughout the entire duration of British freedom’, held this view, which so horrifies the latter-day brand of ‘democratic’ John Bull) our utilitarian philosopher proceeds to object that ‘so extraordinary are the faculties and energies required for performing this task in any supportable manner, that the good despot whom we are supposing can hardly be imagined as consenting to undertake it, *‘unless as a refuge from intolerable evils, and a transitional preparation for something beyond.’*

A refuge ‘from intolerable evils!’ That seems to describe

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the state of such a country as France at the present moment, where 'evil' and corrupt governments succeed one another in rapid succession, and where, in spite of the most enormous scandals, the politicians declared responsible remain, if not in power, still in public life. And Germany a few years ago — who had not one Stavisky but a whole brood of Schlareks — was in much the same case.

Whatever may be said regarding Mussolini, it would be impossible to accuse his brother-despot of Germany of self-seeking. This celibate inhabitant of a modest alpine chalet — vegetarian, non-smoking and non-drinking, has remained the most unassuming and simple of men. He is a man in mortal danger, every moment of his life, who has sacrificed himself, literally, to a principle; that of national freedom. That principle may be ill-conceived or not: that I am not concerned to debate. But this man does not conform to the popular conception of a 'tyrant', at least. He is more like one of *the oppressed!* He is more like Epictetus than like Nero.

§ 8

To provide 'a refuge from intolerable evils'

To provide 'a refuge from intolerable evils', this particular German, Adolf Hitler, has consented to play the part of 'despot'. His is such a case as is envisaged by John Stuart Mill, from whom let me quote again, in conclusion.

PROVIDE A REFUGE FROM EVILS

‘I am far from condemning, in cases of extreme exigency, the assumption of absolute power, in the form of a temporary dictatorship. Free nations have, in times of old, conferred such power by their own choice, as a necessary medicine for diseases of the body politic, which could not be got rid of by less violent means.’

Is it not strange that what this old-time liberal, the very marrow of whose bones must have congealed at the slightest hint of oppressive authority — that what a John Stuart Mill was ‘far from condemning’, should be so sanctimoniously condemned by politicians to-day? politicians whom we can scarcely suspect of an equal fastidiousness where the liberty of the subject is concerned? They protest overmuch, these strange latter-day ‘democrats’ of ours!

'DEMOCRACY' AND 'IMPERIALISM'

§ I

Dr. Samuel Johnson's opinion of the Parliamentary System

THE bluffest of good old principles of 'sturdy British independence' are invariably invoked, upon the political platform, when all this foreign 'fascism' is attacked. Britons never shall be slaves is what it boils down to, mostly, I am afraid. And with their magnificent parliamentary system — that is what is implied — the blessings of 'freedom' are secured to these happy Britons for ever.

But there have been Englishmen, and not among the least 'sturdy' — Englishmen who had as fine a taste in 'freedom' as most that we encounter to-day, such as have 'freedom' most often on their lips — who thought no great shakes of this famous English Parliament; and who even did not unctuously profess to think that the Briton was so much 'freer' than his neighbours.

But let me again quote — how lucky it is we have a literature, which is within the reach of the humblest voter, so that a certain type of nonsense need not go quite unchallenged.

'The duration of Parliament, whether for seven years or the life of the King, appears to me so immaterial, that I would not give half-a-crown to turn the scale one way or the other. The habeas corpus is the single advantage which our government has over that of other countries.'

So remarked Dr. Samuel Johnson, the complete John

Bull. And I for one would rather listen to him, if I desired to be informed upon this subject, than to most of the sturdy school, as we find them in our time — who, when they are about to rob the Englishman of some privilege he has enjoyed since time immemorial, throw out their chests and indulge in a ‘bluff’ confession of faith in the Briton’s *infallible instinct* for what is ‘free’, and what is ‘fair’, and what is ‘just’.

‘The British democracy is neither liberal nor conservative,’ Lord Acton declared: and if that was true for 1880, it is far more true to-day. Politically, the British democracy has grown blurred: such terms as ‘tory’, or ‘liberal’, mean nothing at this time: yet they are employed. And they mislead. Our ‘common front’ reaches from Baldwin to Pollitt: no other country, not even France, has managed quite that unanimity.

§ 2

The respective compulsions of Democracy and of Authoritarianism

But amongst all the tags from which most, if not all, of its original significance has vanished, ‘democracy’ itself, is, I think, the most egregious survival, though naturally, it never corresponded to anything very identifiable. Yet, although it did not exist, strictly speaking, men knew what they *meant* by it, when they used it in conversation. To-day that is no longer the case.

The British Democracy which fought eighteen years ago ‘to make the world safe for democracy’, was not democratically sounded, by means of the vote, as to whether it would care to go and sit in a trench for several years to that end. The War grew, snowball-fashion, as

it rolled on and on, and the commitments of the British Democracy grew. It found, at the end of the chapter, that it had been tricked into that ruinous shambles, to make the world *safe* — safe for something that never existed, and whose very possibility the War finally destroyed.

Meanwhile, such ancient freedoms as we possessed have, one by one, been removed from us — slyly, or upon some threat of ‘crisis’. There has never been *less* democracy to the square inch in England than at the present moment, whatever other good and bad things may be found there.

It has often been debated what public opinion is, or if, in a twentieth-century democracy, it can be said to exist at all. The ‘opinion’ held by the public is necessarily circumscribed by what it knows. And it is allowed to know very little. Its Press is its only available source of information: what is written in Fleet Street, or wired to Fleet Street by the various international news agencies, is public opinion (*see* Chapter iv).

What passes for public opinion, however (with its barbed wire of social or economic ostracism) still takes the place of the straightforward material constraints practised in the ‘unfree’ authoritarian countries. Boycott (which has now been introduced into the usage of civilized nations in their diplomatic dealings with one another) is the type of arm preferred by a ‘democracy’, to the knout, or to the stocks. But, as sheer compulsion, is it less effective? The only thing that makes of boycott a less effective weapon than war in international affairs, is that all nations of the world have not consented as yet to become a ‘democracy’ of nations.

But these distinctions are, at bottom, much on a par

WHAT MR. BALDWIN 'KNOWS'

with the distinction between capital punishment and life imprisonment. The more 'progressive' the form of compulsion, or punishment, is, the less humane, we generally find. A smack in the eye is, after all, a less savage form of attack than a social boycott. A duel is a more decent thing than a whispering campaign, to settle a dispute. We 'advance', but we merely become subtler in our inhumanity.

§ 3

What Mr. Baldwin 'knows'

But let us pause again for a moment before this word 'democracy', as it is popularly understood. Let us take the simplest test for that freedom of democratic institutions we are supposed to enjoy: and return to the question of what part you and I play in the great events of which we are to-day the puzzled witnesses. Who has, or will, officially explain to you even the A.B.C. of the matters at stake?

Mr. Baldwin, in a speech delivered on October 4th, 1936, at Bournemouth, spoke as follows. 'I rejoice in the fact that that resolution' (the *sanctions* resolution of the Labour Conference at Brighton, in favour of war with Italy) 'was passed. I do feel this, and I think the clear-sighted men in the Labour Party would agree with me — that party as a whole will not realize all the implications of their resolution until they acquire the knowledge that is only to be got when they are in office.'

What is this 'knowledge' that is only to be got 'when you are in office'? Anyone who has taken the trouble to read up, however superficially, the past history of any period — say the War of 1914-18 — can guess the sort of

inside ‘knowledge’ to which Mr. Baldwin refers. But what opportunity have any of us of examining this information at the time at which it is of practical relevance? In a hundred years from now a certain proportion of it will have got into the history book by way of memoirs and collections of private letters. But *to-day* all but a handful of men are compelled to take on trust Mr. Baldwin’s judgment upon this body of inside information.

Mr. Baldwin (to continue with him as the most convenient example) reacts in a certain way to certain stimuli. It is not your way and it is not my way. What he ‘knows’ is co-ordinated by him in this manner or in that. But he assumes (as you will have observed in the words I have quoted) that other men would respond in the same way as himself to the information at his disposal. Yet of course other men, more able than himself, or less able, would react in an entirely different way. Where Mr. Baldwin might go to war, they might stop at peace. Where he might react emotionally, they might react rationally; or vice versa.

But no Englishmen alive to-day — except for an insignificant handful — will ever ‘know’ what it is that actuates our present Prime Minister; or if he has acted, or is about to act, in a rational, or in a highly irrational, manner. These are state secrets, they cannot be broadcast.

If with the attentive detachment of a behaviourist philosopher, we observe Mr. Baldwin’s actions and his words (or those of any other man) over a certain period of time; if we compare patiently what he *says* and what he subsequently *does* (and more particularly what he does *not* do, and what he refrains from saying) — if we listen with great attention, to surprise the tone and

DEMOCRACY IS A JOLLY WORD

register the tempo of his speeches — and if we assemble and collate all this with everything else that we can come to know, without ever having access to the Bluebeard's Chamber of the great mysteries of state — we can certainly make a few shrewd guesses. But that is the best we can manage.

§ 4

Democracy is a jolly word

Even in the most perfect democracy that it is possible to imagine, with a population so numerous as ours, the majority of us must live in a condition of similar ignorance to what is going on around us as that experienced by a blindfolded man. It is surprising, of course, how keen the other senses become! But still, we are profoundly 'in the dark'.

I am far from saying that this can or should be otherwise. We are not a Greek city state: we are the wage-slaves of an enormous plutocratic imperialism. Whatever the *theory* of government may be, the practice is necessarily, under such circumstances, secretive and autocratic. The paternalism of the executive is a *sine qua non* of efficient administration. What could be more absolutist than the government of the Soviets: and yet it claims to be an *ideally* popular government — the 'dictatorship of the proletariat'. Yet it is more tyrannous than any Tsardom.

All I am contending is that, at the very best of times,

‘DEMOCRACY’ AND ‘IMPERIALISM’

the term ‘democracy’ is a jolly *word*, and not much more. There are various degrees of coercion, that is all: and the word ‘democracy’ is intended to convey that you are being interfered with less than under a ‘despotism’. What I am saying is only a plea that we should talk a little less nonsense to each other.

But just recently — and in the case of the government of the British Democracy — it has occurred to me, I must confess, that almost *too* absolute a disregard for the opinion of the Many has been displayed by those in power — too absolute, that is, to allow the use any longer of even the *term*, ‘democracy’. A member of parliament — one of the famous legislators of England — has become such a cipher as to be an offence to the intelligence of his fellow-citizens. The bureaucracy has become so paramount as really to allow too little of the comforting illusion of ‘freedom’. A gentleman called Shuster even announced that he no longer desired to see a Minister of Justice appointed: that he had come to the conclusion that all that would be effected by the creation of that controversial office could be equally well effected through the agency of the bureaucracy off-stage, in the teeth of the Justiciary. (This came to the surface, where the man in the street could note it, in the course of a dispute with that true champion of democratic freedom, Lord Hewart.)

§ 5

What is an ‘imperialist’? The Empire of Soviet Russia and the British Empire

But let me take a term or two more — not, heaven forbid, to attack genuine democracy, but merely to put

WHAT IS AN 'IMPERIALIST'?

these things in their proper light, so that we may avoid the more extreme mistakes, and not (in addition to being blindfolded) live too much in a world of helpless illusion. For — '*It is no shame to be suspicious, but only to be deceived.*' And every true democrat should be fairly suspicious. At the present time he should even cultivate incredulity.

Imperialism — now there you have a word that we often hear bandied about! And we all think we know what we mean by it. Mussolini is an 'imperialist', when he tries to subject Abyssinia to the will of the Italian people. 'Trade follows the flag.' He has sent the fascist flag. And trade will come along behind it. The English who colonized America, Australia, and more than half of Africa, who seized India, Egypt, and so forth, were 'imperialists'. And we are 'imperialists', because we still retain those un-English lands. — We invariably took possession of these territories for the *good* of the inhabitants — just as our government is now preventing Mussolini from doing the same thing both for the good of the Abyssinians *and* of Mussolini — for we become better and better and do more and more good. As the British invaders of this land and that were christians, that straight away conferred upon these 'heathens' such an inestimable advantage, that they *should* feel nothing but gratitude for our having consented to place ourselves over them. But still we were — and are — in spite of all this, 'imperialists'! There's no escaping from that.

But the Russian communists are *also* 'imperialists' — for the government of Moscow rules over an assortment of races almost as great as does Great Britain. Upon seizing power the Bolsheviki did not hand back what the Tsars had seized to the Turcomans, Caucasians, Circassians, and so forth. Very much for their own *good*, of

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course, they consented to be ‘imperialists’, and to rule over them, why not? We are all brothers. And in China to-day a communist government, financed and controlled from Moscow, rules over great areas — *for their good*. And if England decides to *déménager* where India is concerned, the Russian Government will in all probability step into the breach, and set up a puppet soviet — just as Japan (another ‘imperialist’) has done with Manchukuo.

So the communists, are, in their slightly different way, just as much ‘imperialists’ as are the English; or as Mussolini would be, if we only gave him the chance.

The two terms, ‘democracy’ and ‘imperialism’, are particularly useful ones to examine side by side, for they are the political complements one of the other. They cannot rationally co-exist within the framework of the same system. They shed a light upon one another; indeed, they show each other up.

§ 6

By whom are we governed?

That I am not undertaking here a serious critique of democracy I need hardly say. I am obliged to assume that my reader has thought a little bit about democracy. But if he should not have done so, my fragmentary observations may possibly embark him upon a fruitful train of thought.

The captains and the kings, in the modern world, have finally departed, and the Bank has come in their place. Because there is no changing of the guard outside the house of the great financial magnate — because the

BY WHOM ARE WE GOVERNED?

virtual power in the land to-day is occult, private and anonymous — deliberately retiring — that is not to say that it is not real, nor that it is not superlatively effective. Indeed, it is far more effective than any visible sovereignty of a hereditary monarch.

The unbounded power belonging to Money, and the brutal proclivities of the sort of person who is apt to become possessed of it, is so common and evident a fact, that it is a scandal reflecting upon all of us that this fact should call for restatement. Yet it does: again and again, we must reaffirm it, because the Money-power exerts itself incessantly to persuade the *masses*, subjected to its power, that it is quite powerless; that it takes no part whatever and exercises no pressure at all, in politics; that it is *unintelligent*, not to say incredibly stupid; and, in short, a quiet little 'power' (not even very *rich*!) which goes its own simple unobtrusive way and minds its own business!

By whom are we governed at this moment? It sounds a stale enough question: and yet if the *Daily Mail* to-morrow offered a prize of a thousand pounds for the best answer, some amusing replies would be forthcoming. We are not governed by the King of England, that is indisputable. A Press baron possesses a million times as much power as King Edward, and in his turn the Press baron is to a large extent at the mercy of the people who advertise in his newspapers. When his policies offend them, they threaten to withdraw their advertisements, and he is unable to ignore that threat. But by whom are they — the advertisers — governed? That depends who they are. Those of them who possess real power only possess it *collectively*. Big Business is so closely organized that we can almost discount, from the point of view of *power* (in the politico-financial sense) such individualist

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‘sports’ as Lord Nuffield or Henry Ford. Finance has the whiphand of industry; and for all practical purposes ‘loan-capital’, as it has been called (to distinguish it from ‘capital’, in the sense of the few hundreds which I hope you have tucked away somewhere against a rainy day) — ‘loan-capital’ is the lord of the earth. Henry Ford is one of us — over against ‘loan-capital’.

The average man in the street (not in Bond Street or Fleet Street, but in Broad Street or Baker Street) believes that ultimately he is ruled in all his actions by Mr. Baldwin and Mr. Eden (representing respectively the home front and the foreign front). But *we* know, of course, that this is an extremely laughable error.

The power possessed by the executive in England — from the Prime Minister downwards — is negligible. Lord Curzon, on one occasion, when a member of the Cabinet, laughed this notion of the ‘power’ of a British Cabinet Minister to scorn. ‘Power!’ he exclaimed, ‘power! Why I have not got the power to send an office-boy across Whitehall!’

In the last analysis, all that gives you anything worth calling power in a modern western democracy is money, either possessed by yourself or possessed by those whose representative you are. How could it be otherwise in a plutocracy — in a ‘Bankers Olympus’?

§ 7

The tenant of 10 Downing Street who went mad

Imagine yourself a British Prime Minister for instance, and assume that you take yourself rather more seriously than is becoming in a successful politician. The absurd idea occurs to you to go down to posterity as a man who

did a spot of good, in his small way — who was not deaf to the sad music of the young miner singing in the London gutter — who had realized that life was as sweet to him as to a Rothschild or a Baring? You think up some scheme whereby the lot of all the down-and-outs and the millions on the border line of starvation may be improved. You wish to call a halt to this fearful scandal. This little scheme of course will require an outlay of several thousand million: and (although a fairly rich man, perhaps) *you* can contribute nothing. But you are the Prime Minister. So you go with your scheme to the Treasury. But — in spite of its name — the Treasury has no money to speak of, any more than you have. The Treasury of course recognizes at once that you are in a fair way to being certified and put away, and that you won't be Prime Minister, anyway, for very much longer. But they are quite polite. They duly put up your scheme as in duty bound to the Bank of England. But the Bank of England (in spite of its name) has no money to speak of — not in *that* sense. So it puts up your scheme to the great Finance Houses of the City of London, with whom it is in constant relations. And *they* (the people at last, who have the money, and so the people with the power) examine your scheme, smile, and shake their heads. And that is the end of the matter — except of course, as I have said, you would not continue in residence at No. 10 Downing Street for very long, subsequent to this piece of tomfoolery.

All this is elementary. And in any serious critique of 'democracy' as it exists to-day it would have to be gone into before discussing anything else. That, from the standpoint of abstract justice and theoretic freedom, it is a bad system, where usury is so absolute, goes without

saying. A *good* king — or a good ‘dictator’ — would be immeasurably better. Unfortunately a good king is a fairly rare bird, and a good dictator is almost as rare though a great blessing when he occurs, as I was able, just now, to get John Stuart Mill to point out to you.

§ 8

Freedom=Irresponsibility

Of equal importance to these concrete considerations regarding the sources of true ‘power’ in a modern parliamentary democracy — of how it is in fact ruled — would be the question of how the mass of the ruled *want* to be ruled. They say that people get the government they deserve. Have these modern democracies perhaps come to prefer some system of this order?

We are confronted with what is a very fundamental question: Do most people really ever desire ‘freedom’? Do they indeed desire the *responsibility* that is entailed by all freedom? The answer to which is an emphatic No! *Freedom* and *irresponsibility* are commutative terms, where the average man is concerned.

The majority of men have to be persuaded or coerced into freedom, and its concomitant, responsibility. The words ‘freedom’ and ‘democracy’ are mere habits — word-habits — with the British Democracy.

Ninety per cent of men long at all times for *a leader*. They are on the look-out, whether they know it or not, for someone who will take all responsibility off their shoulders and tell them what to do. So anxious are they to find themselves in this highly desirable state of tutelage, that they will accept any ‘leader’ — any man who steps out and says, *Let me Lead!* — without inquiring too closely

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into his credentials, or criticizing over-much his leadership afterwards.

So the majority of men would in fact have to be taught *not* to do this, if we desired to achieve a truly democratic regime as opposed to a sham and merely nominal one. Everybody would have, even, to possess *streaks*, at least, of initiative. Some slight desire for the exemplary fatigues and burdens of *responsibility* would have to be present in the composition of the perfect democrat. But in the British Democracy there is less of this initiative, and readiness to accept responsibility, every day. There is less of the specific material of true freedom.

§ 9

The rigours of true freedom

From these few remarks you will have obtained, I hope, some indication of how complex is the problem of 'democracy'. True freedom (and the idea of 'freedom' goes hand in hand with the idea of 'democracy') involves the full activity of the free human agent, man or woman: it requires a great deal of discipline and hard work: it entails a very great deal of discomfort and hard knocks. In short, freedom *is not freedom*, anything but, as popularly understood by the average sensual man of a modern democracy.

What it is quite safe to say, I think, is that freedom is little suited to the temper of modern England. It is quite extraordinary what the Englishman will put up with, in the way of stupid and irritating restrictions upon his freedom of action. Some of these restrictions lend themselves to 'humorous' treatment, alas! — there is no worse enemy of freedom than Mr. A. P. Herbert. He is such

a genial fellow, that he dissipates the stern reality of twelve shillings a bottle for whisky in a jolly British guffaw. If I did not know him to be a man of the highest integrity, I should suppose him to be in the pay of the Temperance League.

A few fists shaken are worth the shaking of a million people's sides, convulsed with that thing so deadly for liberty — good-natured British mirth! Until the Englishman learns that he is trapped every time in the meshes of his famous sense-of-humour, he can never hope to be free. To be free you must learn *not* to smile.

But (putting alcohol aside) interferences with his personal liberty which no French crowd would tolerate — there would be a riot, and the offending ordinance would be hastily withdrawn — the Englishman submits to with unbelievable tameness. He has long consented to be taxed — for a war he was supposed to have *won* — in a way that makes the British Democracy the ideal milch-cow, but certainly not the ideal *democracy*. The French Democracy could never be coolly taxed into a levelling proletarian status, to pay for a war that was in reality an unsuccessful war — a Pyrrhic victory if ever there was one.

§ 10

The ‘Sense of humour’ and the British Democracy

But freedom, in that strenuous, disciplined, understanding of the word indicated above, is not merely a

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passive affair. It is not even exemplified in the violent resistance of the French Democracy to imposition and interference. It is an active thing. It does not want to be interfered with. It even imposes upon itself, at times, iron restrictions. A truly democratic state might even *go dry*. But it would go dry with its eyes open. It would not be *tricked* into teetotalism, like the American people, or be fooled into it by the gradual erecting of an artificial outcropping of snags and obstacles, such as the prohibitive price established for whisky, or the progressive diminishing of the number of licences granted.

As in any democracy grown tyrannous and arbitrary, the *safety valve* has been worked overtime in England since the Armistice: the policy of keeping social life upon a modified war-footing was ably abetted by a lot of blowing off steam — in grumbling, and critical, observations in the Press. Just as the gigantic post-war taxation was successfully put over by *flattery* — by telling the British public that it was a particularly stout fellow of a public, who could 'stand up to taxation' (whereas the gutless Frenchman *could not* 'stand up to taxation') so the programme of drastic curtailment of liberty was put over by appeals to 'the Englishman's sense of humour'.

Whenever anyone refers in a flattering and insinuating manner to his 'sense of humour', the Englishman should immediately, without further parley, knock him down.

Now one of the most usual grumbles heard in the Press was that 'Lord-lumme — talk about *verboden*! Talk about *Prussianism*! Having beaten the Boche in war, aren't we now imitating all the worst vices of Prussian state-interference?'

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But, really, there is, first and last, a great deal of misunderstanding about being free! And since we are being asked, because we are so free, to go and do battle with other nations until they agree to be as free as we are, I am tempted to turn to the modern Prussian, and try to dispel *one* illusion, at least, which may save us all from a world-war. I am tempted (‘greatly daring’) to point out how absurdly *democratic* the fellow is! Whether we like him or not, in the matter of that disciplined, strenuous, freedom I have been talking about, he takes a bit of beating. I am not expressing any opinion as to what is going on in Germany at present (to express a favourable opinion would be more than my place was worth: to express an unfavourable opinion would appear to be soliciting popularity, by too easy and well-worn a high-road); but it is an undeniable fact that *democracy* is being practised in Germany at present, with surprising success.

It was a pure parliamentary democracy that voted in — as nearly by democratic vote as it is humanly possible to get — and has periodically confirmed in power, the great patriot who is now the ‘Dictator’ of the German Democracy.

THE 'HAVES' AND THE 'HAVE-NOTS'

§ 1

The two kinds of 'Have-nots'

BETWEEN a man's public life and his private life there is some relation, it must be allowed. And this applies to governments as much as it does to men. Therefore it is not surprising to find that the present British Government displays the same shortcomings in its Foreign Policy as in its Home Policy.

If our Government's domestic policy is replete with sanctimonious duplicity and callousness, its conduct of its relations with foreign powers is not less so. If it proves itself the enemy of democracy in its dealings with its own people, it is not astonishing to find that it proves itself equally undemocratic in its attitude towards other supposedly 'equal and sovereign' states. If it turns a deaf ear to the distress of its own 'have-nots', we cannot be surprised that it should do the same with regard to the distress of the various 'have-not' powers, whose people exist in a condition of quite unnecessary want and anxiety.

His Majesty's Government is in fact among other things a money-snob — the least attractive of all snobs. For it only regards and treats as an 'equal' a country which has great possessions, and which can boast gigantic usurious banks. With them it is *very* civil and flatteringly intimate and 'cosy': 'money calls to money'. But with a poor country it conducts itself very much *de haut en bas*.

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For what, after all, is this so much canvassed problem of the 'haves' and 'have-nots' — or for that matter the problem of 'equality' — but the problem of the poor and the rich: of those nations who lend money out at exorbitant interest to other nations, and those who have no money to lend? Of borrowers and lenders — of debtors and creditors? But that the British Government should have the *manners* of a usurer, as well as the secret habits of same, is indeed the last straw, in the progressive degradation of English political life. The nations who are offered champagne when they come to London are those whose bank-balances are well in apple-pie order, and who can offer champagne in return — even if the money is wrung out of the gang-labour of a terrified peasantry, basking bleakly in the cheerless glitter of a 'Pink Dawn'.

'What was once a nation of great gentlemen', as an angry French newspaper expressed it, has sunk so low as to be apologetic with the swaggering monied nations, and insolent with the poor ones, like a consequential bagman, and it snarls and threatens like a jingo money-lender, when a recalcitrant 'have-not' power refuses to toe-the-line.

Italy, 'the great proletarian', was treated with the studied insolence of a *nouveau-riche* or peace-profiteer — although England has been rich for so long that the people of England had forgotten (until the post-war began to enlighten them) what it felt like to be poor.

But the problems of the two 'have-nots' — on the one hand of those great crowds of Englishmen and Englishwomen starving, or half-starving, in our midst, and on the other of those foreign populations from whom we steadfastly, coldly, and arrogantly withhold what they require

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to live and prosper — these problems are inseparable. Bursting with self-righteous piety, this government of not merely selfish, but foolish men, consents to uphold a system that perpetuates a state of ‘want in the midst of plenty’ within the borders of the state which it misrules, and equally it consents to be the servant of a similar system outside the limits of its own proper jurisdiction, and to back an oppressive international Cabal which presumes to condemn all but a very few nations to a status of economic serfdom and ‘inferiority’ in order to be able to coerce and enslave them — offering them, should they at last protest, the grim satisfaction of taking their case before its crooked courts — of subsidized ‘experts’ in ‘international law’, and carefully hand-picked *Yes-men*, in the pockets of the bosses of this international racket.

§ 2

The ‘anachronism of war’

‘War is a callous anachronism’, the Foreign Secretary of Great Britain — at that time Minister for League of Nations Affairs — sternly announced. This chronologic judgment merits examination.

Mr. Eden’s statement, is of course, true or false according to your estimate of the moral plane reached by the nations in question, at the time at which the statement is made. If the ‘callousness’ of war stands conspicuously alone, in a world from which every other form of ‘callousness’ has been largely banished, then war is ‘an anachronism’.

Should somebody get up and loudly proclaim: ‘Eating the cooked flesh of animals is a disgusting anachronism!’

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— you would look round you and observe on all hands human beings devouring beefsteaks and saddles of mutton. So you would perceive that, although the consumption of these foods may be 'disgusting', it is decidedly not 'anachronistic'.

Then, again, just what is 'a time'? For it is to your definition of 'a time' that must be related your use of the word 'anachronism'. How far does 'a time' extend?

It would be nonsense, clearly, to assert that by 'a time' we mean the present year, or the present month. The period a few years ago, during which the French were waging war with great fierceness upon Abd el Krim, was 'the time' in which we live, as much as the year 1936 in which Mussolini is waging war in Abyssinia. You cannot for your own convenience say: 'The present time began at 12-30 yesterday. Anything you do that no one else happens to be doing, or to have done, since 12.30 yesterday is "anachronistic".' And if you yourself had done the precise thing to which you are objecting at 3.15 the day before yesterday, and were still in full enjoyment of the fruit of your misdeeds of the day before yesterday, then other people would denounce you as a very egregious and tiresome type of hypocrite if you adopted a high moral tone about what somebody else had done since the hour of the clock arbitrarily fixed by yourself, as constituting the 'present-time'.

If you exclaimed that it was 'out of date' to do what you had done yourself, with complete success, the day before yesterday, they would say that your idea of what was fashionable and what was not seemed to depend very much upon your personal interests.

This arrogation of a right to manipulate the clock — to relegate to oblivion, and so to whitewash, all that

occurred a decade ago, for instance and with much pompous uplift to announce *a perfectly fresh start* — has many advantages, of opposite kinds. It is, for instance, not at all good form to remember what is the record of our allies of the Soviet, although the political personnel of the regime has in no way changed. The ‘Pink Dawn’ so insinuatingly announced by *The Times* will have reassured everyone except a thoroughly ill-conditioned fellow. We have that newspaper’s word for it that the Moscow Flat now has servants’ bedrooms as a matter of course. So we shall be the allies of people who have housemaids and parlourmaids! So all is well. These people are ‘gentry’! That *The Times* should start reasoning like the most vulgar of upstarts, is nothing, however. And an *ad hoc* time-system has once again to be noted. That little matter of the Russian Revolution was in *another time*, not ours. Stalin, Litvinov and the rest are, as it were, reborn, in this ‘Pink Dawn’ — a dawn decreed, we must suppose, by the Foreign Office.

To return to Mr. Eden, that gentleman described Mussolini’s actions as callous. But it is callous to shoot and bomb from the air the Mohmand Tribesmen. Yet the English were doing that simultaneously with Mr. Eden’s verbal barrage at Geneva. By what process of self-delusion can such facts be accounted for? And if Mr. Eden had retorted that there were not so many Mohmands as there were Abyssinians, he would himself be convicted of greater ‘callousness’. For the individual Mohmand who is killed by a bomb from an aeroplane the arithmetic distinction would scarcely be appreciated.

Or if somebody shot Mr. Eden and told him, as he was dying, that his action was not very reprehensible or ‘callous’, really, because he had not shot *several* Edens but

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only *one*: that again would hardly appeal to the ex-Minister for League of Nations Affairs!

All this is so perfectly obvious that it is amazing that it should be considered worth while to resort to such statements in an adult, and relatively educated, assembly. For no man justifies himself with arguments that a council school child of ten would be able to refute, if he has any better shots than that in his locker. And that the 'case' of England should have been conducted upon such an intellectual level as this is a matter for regret, surely: since, in a sense, all Englishmen were being made fools of, as well as being branded as hypocrits.

But that vulnerable term 'anachronism' — that we must pursue to its logical conclusion. What Mr. Eden *meant* we all know. He meant that we all hoped that men would not continue to cut each other's throats, blow each other up, and seek to overreach each other politically and commercially, and that it was *high time they stopped*.

Now that sort of time — *high time* — we all of us understand. It was that sort of 'time' (namely, *high time that men stopped cutting each other's throats*) at the time that the pupil of Aristotle marched to the Indies. It has *always* been that sort of time.

Actually, of course, the trouble is that Mr. Eden does not take his 'anachronism' far enough. Not from any wish to be personal, but merely to bring home an 'anachronism', it might plausibly be contended that Mr. Eden's trousers were an 'anachronism'. Once you accept one 'anachronism', you have to accept a whole string of them! Oh what a tangled web we weave, when first we practice to deceive! And the moment that we invoke *morality*, in order to gain our ends, in *one* issue — why, there is no saying where such a thing is going to stop — once the

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moral law is at large, and on the war-path, and those values, *good*, and *evil*, are loosed upon the world!

The dangers these politicians so lightheartedly run! The gentlemen who rush in where angels have so far feared to tread! I doubt if anything short of the Sermon on the Mount will satisfy the machinery that has been set in motion by this 'anachronism' of Mr. Eden's! We have slipped out of politics into religion, as I have been pointing out all along. Heavens know whither this may not beguile us!

§ 3

The anachronism of 'Slump' and Unemployment

For consider: there are other things just as 'callous' as Mussolini's Abyssinian Expedition to be seen in this world of ours. 'Poverty in the midst of plenty' — those millions of unemployed people, wilting, shrinking and dying by inches, of under-nourishment, boredom and hatred of an existence which holds for them so little meaning: there is some terrible 'callousness' somewhere about, that all *that* should be tolerated; that men 'in power' should sit down day after day and spin phrases about the delinquencies of this or that foreign statesman, and never once remember what responsibilities 'power' brings with it. A pound-note is a piece of paper, it is only a food and rent ticket, after all: and some people have millions of these tickets, some have none. The best have not the most!

Our gutters in London are patrolled by choirs of young Welshmen, who have committed no crime, except to have been born unequipped with the wits of a Schlarek, a Bishirigan, or a Stavisky, or (it must be added) with the

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social advantages of Mr. Eden. Their melancholy songs — for instance 'The Song of the Bottle', about the message washed up on the shore — rebuke in vain the crowds of shoppers. But, music aside, for that is a language that all do not understand, there is scarcely anything that could awaken them to the horror of this brutal system in which we all participate. For, in the lump, men and women are very 'callous'. They are what might be called 'anachronists'! We are all 'anachronists', I am afraid, Mr. Eden included.

But everyone of these unpleasant chickens will come home to roost — I have indicated in passing, perfunctorily, the *sort* of chickens, that Mr. Eden was releasing last autumn at Geneva; and our Press was occupied in the same way. No politician can afford to take that line — the line involved in the use of such words as 'callous' and 'anachronism'. That is all I am saying. Of course a politician is persuaded that this sort of moral weapon can be taken up and discarded at will. Anyone who attempts to take him at his word, or compel him to pursue to its logical conclusion such a statement, can be effectively discouraged. But such methods enrage other — and more honest, if less soft-spoken — statesmen, belonging to countries possessed of a more critical mind. And it is, after all, rather 'callous' to invoke a lofty principle in one case, and, for purposes of state, where you must know that you will neglect it in other cases.

But most humbug comes from lack of intellectual training. For instance, the Frenchman of the type who belongs rather to the *pays réel* than to the official world, the best type of educated Frenchman, abominates this variety of Britannic inconsequence. He cannot understand how a politician can be so *wicked* as to pretend to all

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sorts of ‘ideals’ to which he must realize that he has no right. His own politicians are blackguards, yes — an unbelievable ‘mafia’, who have captured the control of the state machine. But at least they do not pretend to be anything else.

The English term ‘gentleman’ is perhaps that that can best convey the Frenchman’s feelings: he considers that, intellectually, an obligation rests upon a man not to affect to be something he is not, and something that no other intelligent man will believe him to be. There are, for this class of Frenchmen, the good manners associated with *the reason*, as well as with the social hierarchy. The intellect, in short, has its values, approximating to the schoolboy ‘cad’ and ‘gentleman’. And it is one of the obligations of statesmanship to illustrate that code.

§ 4

The ‘Have-nots’ and the Great Depression

Deliberately in the course of this book I have avoided discussion of the economic problems of the poor countries versus the rich countries. That is, in all the decisions being taken at present, or likely to be taken for some time, a secondary question.

The present unaccountable malevolence displayed for Germany by France and Great Britain, or the violent antipathy for Mussolinian Italy shown by our government, has nothing to do with class-hatred. For that there can be class-hatred between nations as much as between men is obvious.

This peculiar and implacable malevolence, is *not* the hatred of the rich man for the poor man. The threatened military attack of the three great Empires of Great

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Britain, France, and Russia upon Germany is not to be accounted for by the fact that Germany is an impoverished outsider. Crippled for lack of raw materials and with no outlets for the energies of its great population, Germany certainly is, and complains of being so (but in a very subdued and reasonable voice): so the three big landowners might be supposed to have decided to destroy this dangerous outsider, before he breaks into their immense preserves, and takes by force what they refuse him. But that is not the explanation. It would be disgraceful if it were. But it is quite inadequate to account for what is happening. So to have gone into that purely economic matter thoroughly would have been to distract the reader's attention, merely.

Yet I cannot entirely neglect it. The reader, while informing himself about the more intangible, and redoubtable, aspects of this vast disturbance, must also glance, at least, at this secondary problem, which played a great part in deciding Mussolini to go prospecting in Abyssinia; though it by no means accounts for the violence of the British reaction.

This purely *economic* source of international difficulty and friction is of recent creation. With that 'Great Slump' — which has been called a greater event than the Russian Revolution, and which, if it is perpetuated, must have much the same results — this international tension began.

An examination of these matters in no way, again, redounds to the credit of His Majesty's Government; which in that, as in the other context, plays an unintelligent and rather ugly role. But I do not want you to get the impression that I have nothing good to say about these gentlemen who are at present responsible for English

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policy: so instead of giving you a short account of this situation in my own words, I will rather quote from a recent book called *The Price of Peace*, which can be recommended to anyone who desires to inform himself, with more thoroughness, of the ins and outs of this more simple and secondary international problem. I would only warn the reader that the joint authors of that well-documented book, Messrs. Simonds and Emeny, promote what is in fact the secondary, and more tangible issue, into the position of a capital issue.

The Great Powers (say these authors) ‘whose policies alone directly affect the question of world-peace’, fall into two groups. The first group is that of the *status quo* powers — such as France and Great Britain — who are naturally satisfied with their enormous possessions, and desire to see no change: their policy is static.

The second and opposing group is the group of revisionist powers; those whose policies are necessarily dynamic. These restless, powerful, dissatisfied countries — Germany, Japan, Italy, for instance — desire *change*. They want the world to *move* rather than remain absolutely stationary. Without some alteration, to their advantage, territorially or otherwise, their national existence will shrivel up, the standards of life of their people rapidly decline; and there, at the bottom of the slope, waits the communist agitator, ready to deliver the *coup de grâce*.

Of course, the so-called ‘satisfied’ powers are *also* descending a gradient; less pronounced, but leading to the same fateful conclusion, unless something is done about it, by our Baldwins, before it is too late. But with the less fortunately situated powers this slope is very steep.

But I will quote from Simonds and Emeny:

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'The consequences alike of the unequal division of the surface of the earth between the various nations and of the development of industry have been to bestow a practical monopoly of the essential raw materials upon a few states. This monopoly, in its turn, has invested the fortunate states with an arbitrary power over the conditions of existence of the other nations. When, moreover, with the onset of the Great Depression, those fortunate states undertook to exercise that power, the result was an acute crisis within certain countries.

'That crisis did not result from any direct embargo laid upon their own resources in raw materials by nations possessing a practical monopoly, but indirectly through the exclusion of foreign goods from their domestic market and the attempt to supply that market by home production. The effect of this exclusion, however, was to deprive the less fortunate states of the opportunity to exchange their goods against the raw materials without which they could not operate their own industrial plants.

'The crisis had nothing in common with the traditional competition of nations for the world market. For the nations which suffered most were primarily affected by their inability to obtain the raw materials essential to enable them to keep their industries occupied to meet their own domestic needs. They were, in effect, in the situation of a city which draws its water supply from a distant town and suddenly finds itself confronted by the purpose of that town to use its water for domestic purposes.'

(This last comparison is misleading, because the Empires of Great Britain, France, and Russia have between them plenty of these raw materials to go round:

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they could supply the needs of the 'have-not' nations without stinting themselves in any way. And when such an *anti-Have-not* as Sir Norman Angell says 'Germany, or Italy, can have all the raw materials they want: all they have to do is *to pay* for them!' he is perfectly aware that he is misrepresenting the issue.)

But again, from Simonds and Emeny.

'With the arrival of the Great Depression and the consequent outbreak of economic nationalism, the question of economic security which had hitherto been chiefly a problem of war became as well a question of peace, for these powers which were deficient in raw materials and food suffered the same effects from the tariff and immigration laws of more fortunate nations as Germany experienced from blockade in war. But whereas in war the consequence of the lack of economic security was immediate defeat, in peace it foreshadowed a progressively declining standard of living with all the social and political implications such a decline must have.'

§ 5

Political pressure: Declared boycott, and undeclared Boycott

Whereas you might be disposed to suspect me of partisanship — in order a little to restore the balance I have been compelled so often to insist upon the rights of those to whom all right is denied, by all parties, at present, in England — these two Americans, Simonds and Emeny, are I think above suspicion.

For long now, as Dr. Schacht has stated it, Germany has, to all intents and purposes, been blockaded. Super-added to the disastrous conditions ensuing from the

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Great Depression, Germany has been exposed to a deliberate boycott, and to economic ostracism.

That was, as a matter of fact, one of the reasons given to explain why, at the outset of the Rhineland crisis, the proposal for 'sanctions' was dropped. Sanctions, it was said, would be useless: Germany was already pretty thoroughly 'sanctioned'; and as to a financial boycott, that had been in force against Germany for several years. On the economic plane, there was nothing much more that you *could* do to Germany!

If you lock up petroleum, coal, iron, rubber, phosphates, nitrates, copper, cotton, tungsten, and so on, beneath the flags, and guarded by the guns, of the four great landowning states, and refuse to come to any arrangement whereby great industrial communities like the German, or Italian, can obtain these necessities of industrial production, you seem to me to be behaving in a highly unreasonable way; unless it is your express desire to reduce these great civilized nations to the status of an African tribe: or rather unless it is your express intention to compel them to come beneath your economic sway and so practically convert them into a colony of your great banks. (Of course you have every reason to assume that long before they reach the level of a Hottentot society they will capitulate: they will be prepared to agree to *any* conditions you see fit to impose, in order that they may secure those industrial necessities — the 'raw materials' — which will enable them to carry on their highly organized life.)

But surely that has not been the idea? If so, it has been a particularly brutal one. But not more brutal than the indifference of the half-dozen 'great power' capitalist governments to the life, health, and happiness of *their*

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own peoples, who have been made to suffer almost as much in the course of these manœuvres — if they have indeed been manœuvres, and not an act of God.

§ 6

A new economic law

A new economic law seems to be emerging to-day. It can be stated as follows. *The larger and more important the state the more internationalist.*

The three great empire-countries are Great Britain, Soviet Russia, and France. This is interpreting 'empire' to mean the armed occupation of the territories of subject peoples. Of these three empire-countries Soviet Russia is the recognized champion of theoretic internationalism. Great Britain is the exponent (following the principles laid down by Benjamin Disraeli) of another brand of internationalism — the equal citizenship of peoples of any race, creed, or colour beneath one national flag: or it would be better to say international flag. For the Union Jack is, strictly speaking, an international flag, in the Disraelian sense. Thirdly, the capital of France is to-day the headquarters of international finance, in a way no other capital city has ever been, not even Vienna in its prime.

That the above three brands of internationalism have come to terms, and decided to work together, is, by this time, self-evident.

§ 7

Kitchen-politics

In the newspaper Press, in which these entities 'Russia', 'France', or 'Great Britain' still are endowed

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with a quite unreal — as it were *political-cartoonist* — existence, we hear of Great Britain 'not quite liking the idea of the Franco-Soviet pact': because in this cartoonist's fairy story of a world 'Russia' is a low-down 'Red', and 'Great Britain' is of course Colonel Blimp. But that sort of political gossip for the nursery even Englishmen are to-day apt to dismiss as kitchen-politics.

§ 8

Germany's paradoxical industrial equipment

Now, the economic law to the effect that to be *very large* is to *internationalist* has to be qualified. There are very large states — Germany for instance — which are not internationalist.

Germany is not, however, an empire. It is not a great cosmopolitan State, like France, Great Britain, or Soviet Russia — though if Germany had been victorious in the War this would have been otherwise. As things are, Germany in its position as one of the great 'outcast' states, is rather like an enormous Balkan State, say an immensely bloated Bulgaria: but paradoxically equipped for industrial production as if it were an empire. Just as Vienna still possesses the stately proportions of the brilliant capital of a state of the first importance, so Germany is 'anachronistically' equipped with all the technical splendour of one of the two or three greatest empire-states in the world.

Germany possesses only tuppence-ha'penny in its exchequer, and its most prominent nationals are treated like pickpockets in the gilded capitals of the great Gold-block empires. But it is able to build as fine a locomotive, battleship, or air-liner as is the richest country. And,

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although completely broke and 'kept poor' on purpose, with relentless cunning, by its overwhelming neighbours, it avails itself of this superb plant to construct for itself what it requires for self-defence, or so that it may barter (since it is not allowed to have spare cash) a locomotive against truck-loads of butter and corn with some other nation.

§ 9

The dead hand of Nineteenth-Century Liberalism

It is something quite new in international relations, this callousness about a 'great people', like the German. As has often been pointed out, even the French Revolution did not cause France to be immediately regarded as an outcast or pariah, fit only to be destroyed. Harsh as the Prussian terms of peace certainly were after the Franco-Prussian War, they were not aimed at the *extinction* of France, as a 'great nation', nor did they cause it.

Other 'great nations', formerly, had a certain fellow-feeling for any nation which could be regarded as a 'great nation'. Even if they had it at their mercy, it never occurred to them to crush it out of existence — or to enslave it (to '*le réduire en esclavage*', as M. Béraud would say). Europe was still one family. It still was 'christendom'. It is only with the complete triumph of internationalism that such an attitude has shown itself, in all its callous and ugly extremity.

This is one of the great paradoxes of our time. Whereas to-day liberalist 'emancipation' has triumphed everywhere, unexampled tolerance co-exists with unexampled intolerance. In Anglosaxon countries at least the Jew

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has been freed from the last vestige of the old social handicap: women have attained economic equality with men: the Negro is no longer a 'Nigger'. Yet the British Government treats the people of Germany as if they were a negro people — or as if they were the extremely inconvenient and troublesome half-starved population of a mining-village in a 'distressed area'. — This is something quite new. It is one of the signs of the new savagery of our time.

The abstract conceptions of nineteenth-century liberalist ideology have directly led to this situation. It is a situation in which, busy with theory, we have lost touch with the concrete and the real. We have *freed* with one hand and *enslaved* with the other. We have one-sidedly, and superficially, applied our principles: to-day our principles, since we do not 'move with the times', cause us to be terribly unjust.

We are still busy being 'just' in a manner appropriate to a nineteenth-century background. But the scene has changed, without our remarking the fact, with astonishing rapidity. And in this twentieth-century *décor* we appear sometimes as monsters of injustice.

This is not because we are lacking in a sense of justice. It is only because we are slow-moving. It is because we think we have one set of people before us, whereas in fact we have quite a different set.

§ 10

What is 'a great people'?

That to-day, when *nation* is not a popular word with the internationalist orthodoxy, it is perhaps no wonder that a 'great nation' should be even more unpopular

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than a 'nation', *tout court*. Especially must this be so when we consider what the adjective 'great', in the expression 'great nation', has usually stood for. And 'great' is, anyway, yet another extremely unpopular word.

However this may be, the Germans are no longer a 'great people'. They no longer derive any benefit, in international eyes, by reason of the possession of such a national past as is implied by such names as Bach, Goethe, Kant, Leibniz, Beethoven.

But this is not to be wondered at, as I have said. Art, Science, and Philosophy, are all very well in their way: but in the new savagery to be Sebastian Bach, but *without money*, is to be *nothing*. So why be Bach? Money and great music are ill-assorted.

Our political leaders have developed the mentality of the Profiteer. But when you have said *nouveau riche*, or profiteer, you have not said everything. It is more complicated than that.

One of the things that made a European People qualify for 'greatness', was the presence, in their history, of 'great names'. And those names invariably belonged to men who had excelled in Science, in Art, in Letters, or Philosophy. These occupations, to-day, all smack of reaction.

'Left' wing politics come into the matter here. Art and Letters are fatefully suggestive of a cultivated (and probably polite) society. They suggest good manners, leisure; an aristocratic, or a great merchant, class, hovering in the background.

Consequently, if a people wanted to recommend itself as a 'great people' in our time, it would be advisable to keep quiet about its 'great men' — its 'seers' and 'geniuses' and all that!

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Germany has perhaps had *too many* great philosophers, great artists, great musicians! Perhaps that is what is the matter?

But no, it is not that entirely, either. These things play their part. 'Greatness' is a term that may only apply to a moneylender of the first flight (we call them bankers) or some crooked salvationist politician who has shot and bombed his way to a proletarian throne. But there are many factors.

The stage has been cleared for the apotheosis of two types of man. First, there is the money-king. And second there is the agitator (Marx or Lenin).

Now the money-king has no 'divine right', to give him a nice comfortable feeling. He is not 'sure of himself' in the way known to the feudal monarch. He goes about, even, somewhat with his tail between his legs — furtively, and yet bursting with an enormous sense of power — of necessarily concealed and in some measure frustrated power. He lives for power — therefore he is rancorous and jealous. He has none of the genial carelessness of the great renaissance banker-princes. And all those gifts that money cannot buy — such as the gifts of intellect or the gifts of the heart — send him into paroxysms of jealousy.

So he joins very readily with the communist in hatred of the 'intellectual'; and is equally loud in his flattery of the Plain Man. So it comes about — I fear my explanation may appear a little tortuous, but it was a tortuous phenomenon I was describing — that at least all those claims for *intellectual* pre-eminence which used to play such a great part in the status of the 'great nation' no longer can do so. All the civilized, and non-animal, qualifications are taboo for these new-barbarians.

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Rembrandt is merely a handicap to international consideration where Holland is concerned. Molière will be found somewhat compromising in the France of Blum.

So it transpires that it is possible for the British Government to regard Germany, which is still often referred to in the Press as 'a great nation' (the Press retains all the old, misleading terms) as *a great herd*. This gigantic community is regarded *abstractly*. They are of no more consideration than are seventy million coolies — but they are *disaffected* coolies, which it is impossible to control by either of the two recognized methods: either that of dictatorship, on the 'proletarian' model, or dictatorship on the 'democratic' model.

It is after all only natural that that City of London which puts its money into Japanese or Indian factories — where it can obtain labour for a quarter the expense — instead of in Great Britain (of which London happens to be the capital) — and which regards *all men as equals* (namely as so many millions of coolies, as I have said — either white, yellow, or black) should not waste much time over 'a great people' or any highfalutin', sentimental nonsense of that sort.

§ I I

The substitution of the Abstract for the Concrete

If we were to reduce to its simplest terms, and look for the ultimate cause, the *fons et origo*, of this terrible *impasse* in which we find ourselves, we should have to go back to that moment in Europe when for the *concrete* values of common sense we began to substitute the *abstract* values of theoretic idealism. The triumph of the

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abstract at the expense of the concrete has been our undoing.

Nineteenth-century liberal 'idealism' let loose upon us a plague of theory. This especially afflicted Anglo-saxony. The Anglosaxons suffered more than any other community — possibly because the Industrial Revolution, and the abstract values that were its necessary accompaniment, came to England and America first.

Liberalism was a great middle-class luxury. It was the plaything of a wealthy amateur. But the poor man — the 'forgotten man' — that Great Britain and the United States had overnight become, cannot afford that luxury.

What people get if they become *too* liberal we have all now been able to observe. They get the cheap salvationist imperialism of marxian communism. In the case of that poor, ineffectual, effusive, incompetent colossus, Russia (the society depicted in such a life-like manner by Tchekov) this great salvationist racket was put across by a small band of violent and crafty men.

I fear that this may sound offensive to many people who regard the personnel of this indescribable *mafia* as demigods. But what on earth is one expected to do but protest against this failure of eyesight — for it is that? How can anyone in their senses and with a good pair of eyes in their head suppose (however much the publications which pour out of the House of Gollancz seek to convince them of it) — once he has had a good hard look at the photographs of Mr. Litvinov and his associates — that these men are *saviours*! How can anyone be so lacking in elementary good sense as to suppose that people of this type are running the communist international for anybody except their own sweet selves and

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their masters? Who can be so naive as to suppose that such people as these are concerned with the *beaux yeux* and snub noses of the Russian 'masses'? It is an astounding delusion.

Obviously no *theory* in itself matters a row of pins: it is the people who adopt it and work it that matter. So, even if you are attracted by some aspects — or by all — of communist theory, you might at least give yourself the trouble to have a good straight look at the individuals who are affecting to put it into practice.

These are shrewd, excitable, rather over-brutal, business-men, or men of the sharp-businessman type, associated with highly skilled, but particularly blood-thirsty, political agitators in the old nihilist tradition: and they must have many a good laugh over the young gentlemen at Oxford and Cambridge — or Harvard and Yale — who solemnly pore over their pompous utterances. They may be quite amusing fellows, and certainly they must be people who have few illusions (which is something), and who would not, in private, be talking sentimental nonsense to one the whole time. But to suppose that they desire to *save* us all —! And if they do not want to save the world, what is all the fuss about?

Eventually something may emerge from the 'Great Russian experiment' rather like a squalid Port Sunlight — with a great deal of Uplift, administered by trained Uplifters; with a good deal of community-singing, but very little pocket-money — and unexampled vindictiveness in dealing with breaches of the rules. That is all right no doubt. But why must so many millions of people be massacred in order to attain that ideal?

Communism, however, was implicit in the Industrial Revolution-cum-Bourgeois Enlightenment. Communism

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is merely the extremity of nineteenth-century liberalism — though it has subtly transformed that theoretic tolerance into intolerance, and that 'kindly' Fabian smile (which we may see embalmed in the features of Mr. Shaw) into a mask of hate — the '*haine creatrice*' of the fierce class-warrior.

So the fleshpots and idealisms of the nineteenth century — the 'free contract' of Adam Smith, the maudlin tears of Mrs. Beecher Stowe, and the earlier facile reformism of Charles Dickens — has resulted in a society where we have elected to rule over us the ticket-of-leave man, the company-promotor, the prosy 'good-sort' (who is not a good sort at all), and the tailor's dummy — the starched advertisement for mass-produced shirts. Liberalism substituted itself for christianity: and, dying, it designates communism as its heir.

The confusion naturally grows daily — until when we say 'peace' we mean 'war', when we say 'democracy' we mean 'dictatorship' and servitude; when we say 'security' we mean 'insecurity'; and indeed when *everything* one man says to another has to be reversed before it can be understood, or before it bears any resemblance whatever to the truth.

Meanwhile, as our customary associates have become moneylenders, firm-magnates, crooks in the 'salvation' racket, drug-addicts, ex-bank-robbers, pepper-gamblers, the riff-raff of the dispossessed aristocracy in the pocket of the stock-and-share tipster, it is not very remarkable that our attitude towards a 'great people' should be a thought sardonic and tinged with a certain irony. As to treating these 'barbarians' across the Rhine any differently to what we should treat the disaffected tribes on the North-West Frontier, that would be absurd. This

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outcast nation of sausage-eating brutes, without money, can defy us and our banks if it likes! Just as the dago emperor in that dusty old ruin, Rome, decided to do! Well. We shall see! mutter under their breath our kindly, 'democratic', statesmen.

To conclude this 'have' and 'have-not' part: we have seen that among nations, as among individuals, there are (1) the dispossessed, and (2) those who have great possessions. And the same callous, vulgar irresponsibility mark the attitude of a rich power to a poor power as is displayed in the dealings of our big business oligarchy towards their unhappy subjects.

Again, in that mock-parliament of the nations the principles of democracy are supposed to obtain, just as they are supposed to in the national parliaments of the respective states-members. And yet the claim is just as hollow. The same insolent disregard is shown for the rights of the small power as is shown for the rights of the small man, or for his parliamentary representative, the 'rank and file' M.P.

Such a country as Poland — one of the poor but proud ones of the League of Nations — has for some time been agitating against the 'dictation by the great powers', which makes a mockery of all the League proceedings. So it comes about that it is not only Germany that is compelled to harp upon 'equality'.—But I would prefer that the last word upon this important subject were not

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my own. And having begun with quotations from an American book, detached from the affairs of Europe, and which is able to be more 'objective' than any book written in this hemisphere is able to be, let me return to it again: and you will notice that, with judicious deliberation, it tells much the same story that you have heard from me.

'Woodrow Wilson . . . did not press the point (at Versailles). As a consequence there was denied to the Germans of Austria the exercise of the right of self-determination. Instead, those in Austria proper were assembled in a new Austrian Republic which was expressly forbidden to unite with the Reich, while the balance, in Bohemia, were handed over to a new Czechoslovak state. So far, at least, the Paris Conference rejected its own principle of self-determination and remained faithful to the older dogma of balance of power. . . .

'In dealing with German nationality . . . the victors not merely forbade the Austrian fraction the exercise of the right of self-determination, but they also took from the Reich itself large areas which had been German in 1914. In most instances, by no means all, this course could be squared with the principle of self-determination, for the populations thus taken were composed of Poles, Alsatians, and Danes. But the allied statesmen could not have it both ways. To appeal to the principle of self-determination whenever it could be made to work to the advantage of alien minorities within the Reich, and to reject it when it favoured German majorities outside, was to convict themselves of transparent hypocrisy.

The fashion in which the statesmen of the Allied and Associated Nations manipulated the principle of self-

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determination at Paris, therefore, bestowed upon the German People a grievance of well-nigh unimaginable proportions, since it constituted a flagrant violation of equality. If the Poles, the Danes, the Alsatians were entitled to self-determination even when, as a consequence, German frontiers had to be mutilated (and by the creation of the Polish Corridor, the German unity was destroyed) what conceivable justification could there be for denying the German-speaking populations of Austria and Bohemia the right to unite with the Reich? And this unequal treatment, which was patently unjust, was not limited to the matter of self-determination. On the contrary, it was extended to the field of armaments as well.'



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THROUGHOUT this book I have been compelled to insist upon the vindictiveness and injustice of this Dictated Peace — of Versailles, of Trianon — and to turn myself into an advocate on behalf, principally, of the German People. But this is not because I am 'pro-German'. Germany is not my 'spiritual home', or anything of that sort. I merely have some understanding of the results for all of us of the perpetuation of all this injustice, incomprehensible at this time of day. Purely out of self-interest, the Englishman should acquaint himself with the details of it, and take some steps to bring it rapidly to an end, or else to dissociate himself from it.

If this is ever to be done, the greatest firmness is required in our diplomatic dealings with the Government at Paris — whether it be a Cartel, a Popular Front, or a Right-Moderate combination. When M. Flandin at London in March (at the time Germany was being arraigned for allowing her troops to walk about on her own territory) exclaimed that if the other Locarno Powers did not speed up their deliberations (in the sense desired by his Government) he would go back to Paris, and 'return with a mobilization order in his pocket', it is quite plain what answer should have been given him. He should have been told that if in London he employed the threat of war to extract dangerous promises from Great Britain — of undertakings undesired by the British People — that he could return to Paris and stop there.

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And that if France attacked the Germans, that whatever happened England would not be by the side of the French. There would then have been no war, and no more bluster, either, on the part of this Parisian clubman, the accredited factor not of France but of the Comité des Forges and the great Finance Houses of Paris. Instead, of course, he was rewarded with Staff Talks. England has been committed, seemingly, to the *ébauche* of a military alliance.

Once that type of bluff had been called, the 'war clouds' would roll away in half an hour, and for ever. For it is as true to-day that the Franco-Soviet combine will not make war on Germany unless they are convinced of the participation of Great Britain, as it was true in 1914 that Russia would not have challenged Austria had it not been for the Entente Cordiale.

But it is not as if the French Government and 'la grande Presse' became reasonably polite, after gaining their ends, and being given Staff Talks — and probably being privately promised ultimate guarantees, at some not too distant date, for Austria and Czechoslovakia. It is not as if Great Britain became forthwith a little popular with the country in whose defence Englishmen have agreed to die. No. England is not popular. It is not perhaps to be expected that England should be popular anywhere but in France — and perhaps in brave little Belgium. In Italy the Englishman, is, of course, the arch enemy, henceforth. At some future date, it is recognized, the Mediterranean will be a battleground, in which the Empire of Wolfe, and Clive, and Rhodes will sink beneath the waves of the Latin Sea. But the fact is that England is popular *nowhere*.

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In France there is almost as much contempt and dislike for England as in Italy at the present moment. And Staff Talks do nothing to alter that.

All these people feel that the latter-day weakness of this monster Empire has been demonstrated by what has recently happened in the Mediterranean. The rapid and impressive conquest of Abyssinia by Mussolini, in the teeth of British opposition, is at the same time a victory over England. The limit of British power, the unsuspected nature of British weakness, has been gratuitously revealed by our Mr. Eden. It has been revealed in the most glaring fashion, in the genevan limelight of 'open diplomacy'.

And, once Germany out of the way — if that can be compassed, with the kind assistance of that dear old gentleman, Mr. Baldwin, and his fashion-plate of a protégé, Mr. Eden — Great Britain would qualify *immediately* for the rôle of Enemy. There is not a single country you can mention that would come to the assistance of the Empire of Great Britain if attacked by the Soviet Empire and by the two great Latin Powers. There is no Treaty of Alliance we could make, which would be worth the paper it was written on, to secure *our* 'security'. But indeed there is never any question of such a thing as that. It would be too absurd, I suppose, even to suggest it.

When I asserted that there is *no* country in which the Englishman is popular, I should have mentioned the one exception. That omission of mine was deliberate: for it was in order to elicit the full flavour of that comedy, of the *one solitary exception*, that I have once more described the unenviable isolation of Great Britain.

There is one country where the Englishman is certain

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of a warm welcome: there is one country whose government never ceases to proffer friendship, and to be accommodating and polite, and that is Germany. Year in and year out, like a love-sick suppliant, Herr Hitler pays his court to the haughty Britannia. Every insult that can be invented even by the resourceful Mr. Churchill is tamely swallowed, every rebuff of Mr. Baldwin's, every sneer of Mr. Eden's, is meekly accepted, by this pertinacious suitor!

When Britannia darkly conspires with France and Soviet Russia — sends her trusty Sir Austen to Vienna and Prague to plot the frustration of the German desire for fraternal union with the Austrian Germans under the heel of Rome, or of those languishing beneath the suzerainty of the Czech — when General Staffs openly discuss the most suitable means of wiping out German cities, and of blockading the Baltic and so starving the population of the Reich, it makes no difference. There is no change in the attitude of Adolf. He just sadly shakes his head over all these heartless proceedings, of the siren of his predilection, and brings round his customary bouquet next morning. And if Britannia in a tantrum at his persistence (for the servants — namely the British people — are rather inclined to side with the faithful Adolf, and to reproach the august Mistress of the Seas with callousness) flings back the posy at this old-fashioned — almost operatic — *inamorato*, he only picks it up, dusts it with a quiet, unaffected, pathos, and places it against his heart, under his rough homespun swastikaed tunic.

I am prepared to prophecy that when all the rest of the world has turned its back upon this unkind and greatly envied Mistress of the Seas, that the faithful Adolf will still be there — offering her his strong right

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arm (if she will not accept his heart and hand) for her defence against her enemies. And, still disdainful, it may be that Britannia will be compelled to accept. England may yet come to owe her survival to the humanly intervention of the faithful Adolf. A humiliating thought, but *que voulez-vous!* as Jacques Bonhomme would say. Should Hitler fall first, however, then Britannia will, seemingly, be quite friendless. Meanwhile, it is a pretty comedy, as seen from the pit.

If I have figured as an advocate for the German, so stupidly repressed and, in season and out of season, badgered and browbeaten, I have likewise figured somewhat as an advocate for those extremists who, rejecting as too slick and suspiciously destructive the communist solution for all our ills, yet recognize that some radical and revolutionary solution is imposed upon us. 'Fascist' thought is outcast thought, in the same way that certain countries are outcast countries. And although I am very far from being anything that could be described as a 'fascist', I consider the 'fascist' just as worthy of attention as the communist. Further, if we seek to suppress, muzzle, and misrepresent him, we are likely to involve ourselves upon the side of the communist in the great struggle that is opening. That appears to me, for the reasons which I have set forth, in the highest degree undesirable.

But it may be that I myself have exhibited some of the characteristics of the 'extremist'. If that is so, it is hardly to be wondered at. I write under the influence of the terrible impression made upon many of us by that slammed door, by which our Government has answered

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the German offer of a twenty-five year treaty of friendship. Eighteen years after the termination of the War an ultimatum is sent to a shrunken and impoverished Germany. Beneath the threat of the armed forces and combined wealth of the three greatest Empires in the world — the French, the Russian, and the English — Germany is presented with these conditions: either to leave one of her two main frontiers undefended, so that France's African troops (which have been pouring into Strasbourg) can march in, unhindered by so much as the obstacles of a hastily dug trench; or *else* — contemptuously ignoring Herr Hitler's proposals, Great Britain will officially join the ring of armed nations which surround Germany, when the slightest of manufactured 'incidents' can be used to precipitate a universal attack.

Meanwhile, the League of Nations having unanimously passed sentence upon Germany in London, and assured the French Government that in ratifying the Franco-Soviet pact it had acted *entirely* in harmony with Locarno, and according to all the letters of the law, the Germans are requested to go to the Hague and submit all over again to this objectionable farce!

Of what nature exactly is the incredible vindictiveness at work in all this tragical transaction? It is impossible to say *what* is at work: it is impossible to give a name to those forces whose prodigious power sweeps our little politicians forever in *one* direction like so many iron-filings beneath the compulsion of a magnet: but one can only feel that out of such violent unreason nothing can come but the most limitless evil. If we were all social-democrats, if we were all French chauvinists, if we were all Jews, we could not hate these Germans more, it seems! Or so the actions of our Government suggest,

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although we know that the great majority of Englishmen have no trace of this paradoxical hatred, and even desire to live on terms of cordiality with the German people. In these strange 'democracies' Government and People are poles apart, as has so often been pointed out, and here is one of the most glaring instances of this peculiar fact.

Writing, then, at such a moment, it is impossible not to express oneself with a touch of that 'extremism' which such policies as these engender. However much one has said to oneself all along that it was for *this* — and for what *must* come after this — that everything was being done: however clearly one may have seen that there could only be one issue to all that was being so carefully prepared: nevertheless when at last it is there, when it has started happening, under one's eyes, one cannot react to it quite after the fashion of a mathematician, who contemplates the crowning solution of all his step-by-step, symbolic, progression. — It is impossible not to resent the fact that one has been so right — that one has not by good fortune been *wrong*!

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